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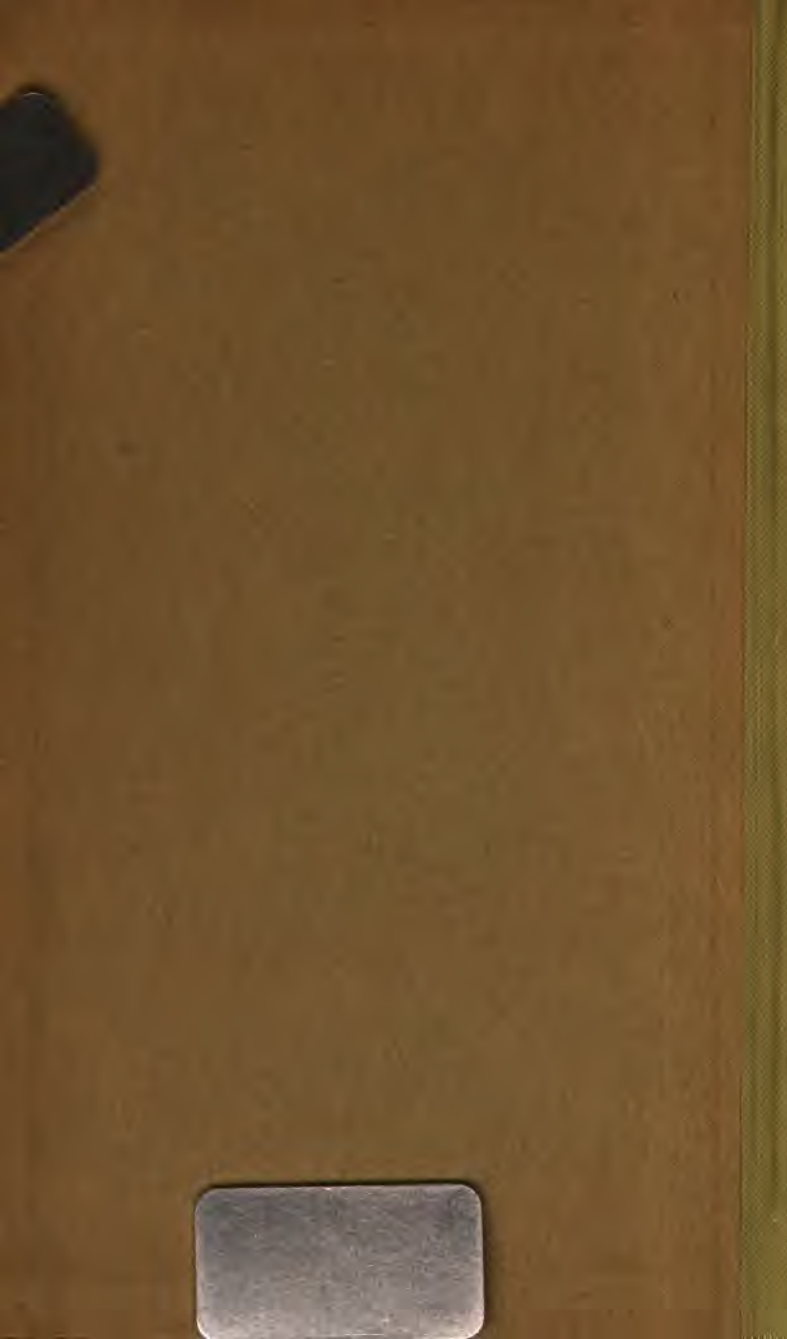
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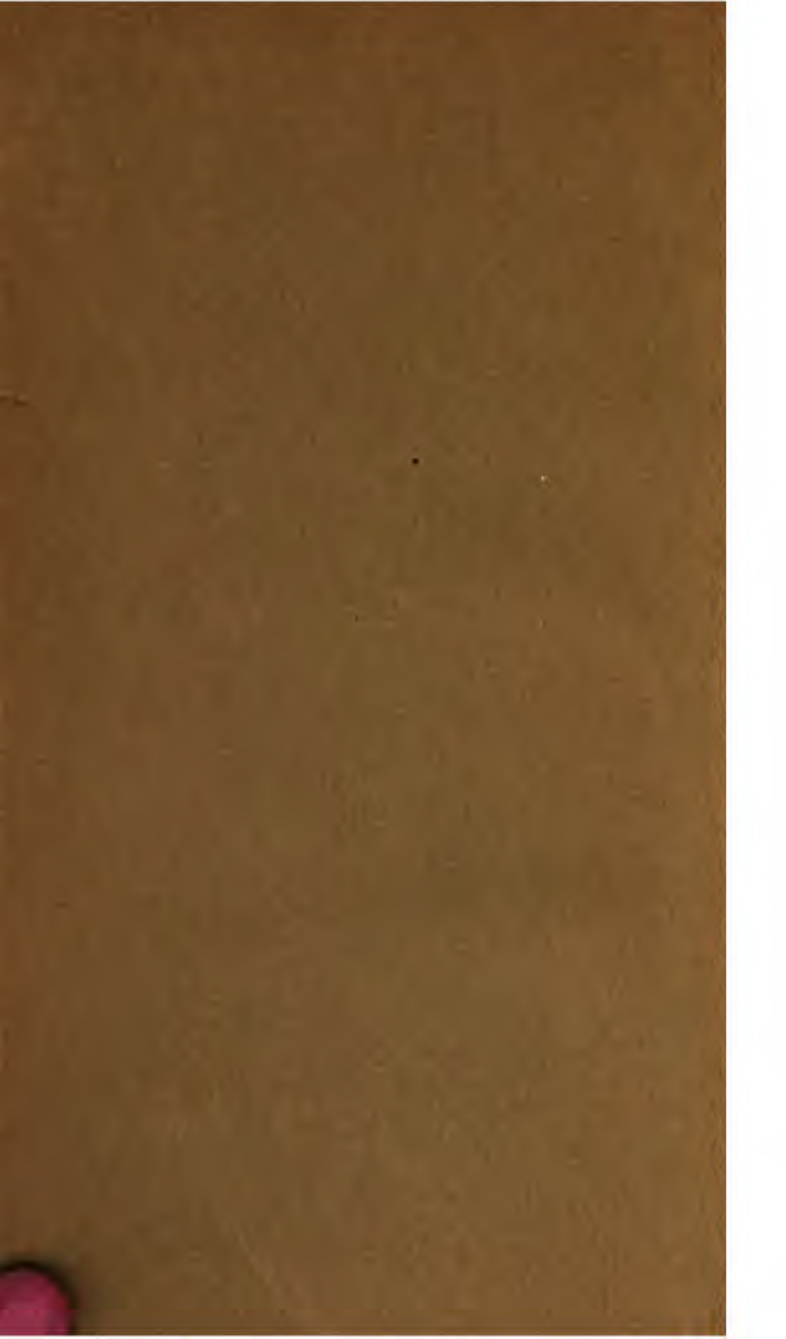
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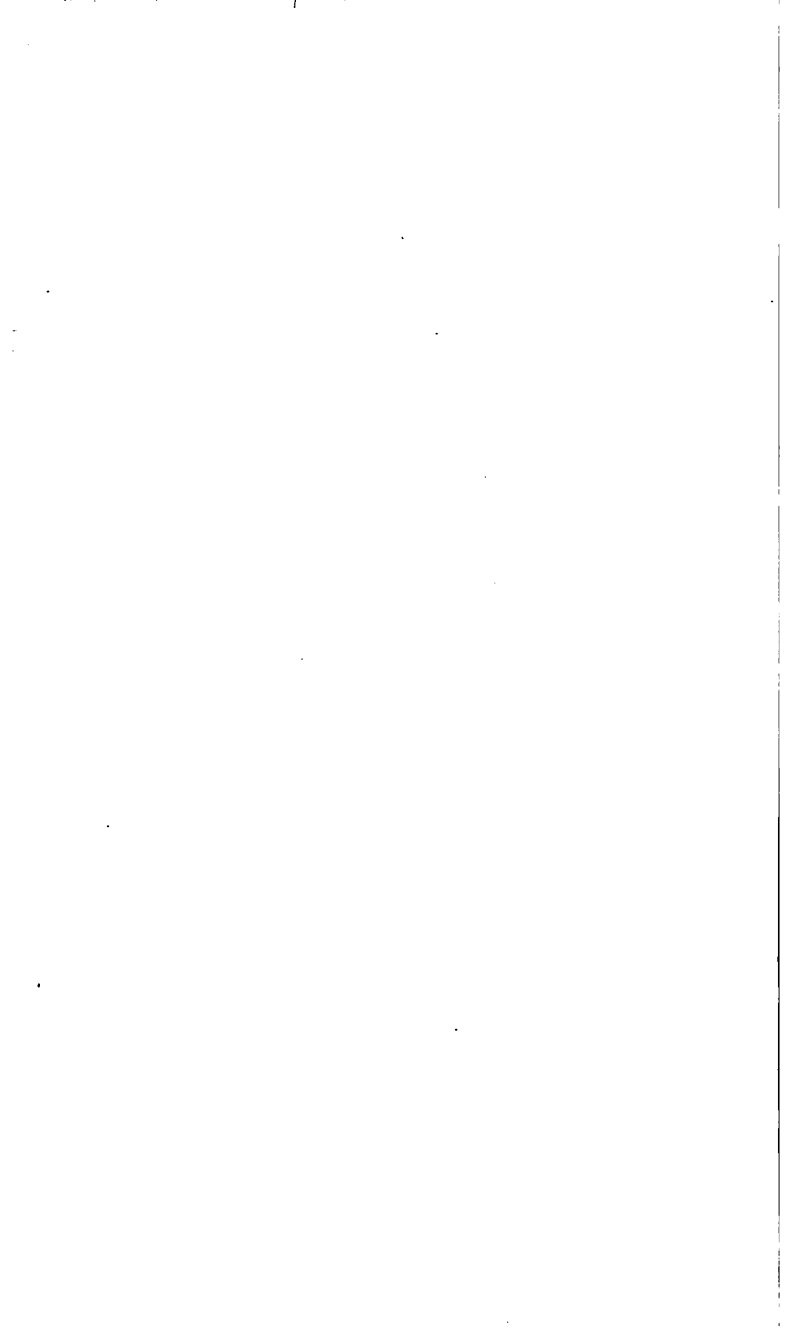
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LECTURES
ON
DRAMATIC LITERATURE;
OR,
THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE PASSIONS
IN THE DRAMA.

BY
SAINT-MARK GIRARDIN,
PROFESSOR OF THE FACULTY OF LETTERS IN PARIS, MEMBER OF THE
ANCIENT ROYAL COUNCIL OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION AND
OF THE ACADEMY.

First Series.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY ROBERT GIBBES BARNWELL.

"Lectorem delectando, pariter que monendo."

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TO

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OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA.

"The vocation of the Muse is a religious mission ; she loses not her spiritual prerogative, though shorn of her stately pageantry and despoiled of her festive robes. Her power to convert and to enlighten, to purify and to raise, depends not on the splendor of her appearance, but on the truths that she proclaims."

AUTHOR'S ADVERTISEMENT.

IN writing from memory these Lectures, delivered during two years at the Faculty of Letters in Paris, upon the employment of the passions in the drama, I did not intend to make a book ; I only wished to fix the remembrance of some of those meetings which the kindness of my hearers, for nearly fifteen years, rendered so agreeable to me.

I endeavored in these Lectures to show how the ancient authors, and especially those of the seventeenth century, expressed the sentiments and passions most natural to the human heart, such as paternal and maternal tenderness, love, honor, jealousy, and the like ; and how these sentiments and these passions are expressed in our own days.

On such a subject, moral reflections naturally succeed to literary ones ; and I have desired to show as well as I could the union which exists between good taste and good morals. I certainly ought not to fail in this duty, which is the noblest part of the functions of a Professor. May I take the liberty to add that, in speaking thus, I have reason to believe that I do not offend my young friends, and that the best way to obtain their applause is always to merit their esteem !



TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following Lectures, delivered at the Sorbonne, were first published in the *Journal des Debats*, and were so much admired that, at the earnest request of his hearers, the learned Professor consented to revise them for publication, in the form of a book. In presenting them to the American public, the translator claims for himself no other credit, as he has had no other object, but that of faithfully representing the thoughts of the original.

A foreign journal* of high reputation, soon after its appearance, passed such deserved eulogy upon the author, as well as his work, that it is deemed unnecessary to say more in its recommendation than simply to extract a few of its critical remarks:

“M. Saint-Mark Girardin is an honor to the literature, an honor to the journalism of France. Learned without pedantry, and acute without flippancy, he possesses all the qualities which make a writer estimable. He has keen insight, sound judgment, healthy morality, varied acquirements, and an eloquent style. We have not read a work for some time which has given us so much pleasure, as the ‘Cours de Littérature Dramatique.’ The subject is interesting, the execution brilliant. It is a work which awakens all kinds of pleasant recollections, and rouses attention to some of the

* Foreign Quarterly Review.

most beautiful passages of ancient and modern art. It is a work eminently suggestive. It not only gives new views, but suggests others in abundance; and this, perhaps, is the most valuable quality a book can possess.

"M. Saint-Mark Girardin's object is to examine the manner in which the ancient poets, and those of the seventeenth century, expressed the natural sentiments of mankind, such as love, parental love, love of life, jealousy, honor, &c., and the manner in which they are expressed by the moderns. The rules of good taste and sound healthy feeling, are exemplified in the one; the excesses of caprice and falsehood, are developed in the other. The work is an invaluable guide to the young poet, because it not only lays down general principles, but illustrates them fully."

After such a graphic and clear statement of the merits and character of the work, nothing is left for the translator to add, but to express his hopes that this undertaking will not be entirely devoid of interest and instruction.

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LECTURES

ON

DRAMATIC LITERATURE.

I.

OF THE NATURE OF DRAMATIC EMOTION.

THE sympathy which man feels for man is the source of the pleasure which the arts give which proceed from the imitation of human nature. It is especially on the stage that this sympathy is excited and developed, because it is there that the imitation is more faithfully represented. On the stage we see not only the form and countenance of the individual, but we also see the emotions of his heart. We find pleasure in gratifying the moral curiosity which we possess in observing our like, in seeing how they live and act; in pitying their misfortunes if they are unhappy, and in laughing at their faults if they are ridiculous. The Theatre satisfies this sentiment by the exhibitions of Comedy, which gratify our malignity, and those of Tragedy, which excite our pity; not that we love the misfortunes of others, but we love the pity which we feel in witnessing them on the stage, where the sufferings of the actors are only fictitious. The soul experiences pleasure in the agitation which the sight of human passions gives it, a pleasure the more agreeable, since it knows that these passions are only an image and an illusion which it creates.

The violent emotions which urge tragic heroes to the commission of crime, the loves which make their joy and their torment, affect and move us to pity without rendering us uneasy. Our fears are removed, because we well know that we are not then ourselves exposed to dangers of this kind, and we enjoy, without scruple, the sight and proximity of those passions, which, as *Nicole** well says, are turned into pleasures. There is, nevertheless, in this enjoyment something dangerous; and what makes the Theatre a subject of censure to such preachers and moralists as Bossuet, Nicole, and J. J. Rousseau, is the fact of our believing that in making the soul more tender it does not corrupt it, and that in stirring up the leaven of the passions it does not cause them to ferment.

The exhibition of human life, and the imitation of our sentiments and characters, is the principal source of dramatic pleasure. We will endeavor to show what are the means of producing it.

The first requisite of dramatic emotion is that the passion which it excites should be genuine. On the stage, nothing is true but what is general, and what every body feels. Of all the dramatic passions, love is the most affecting, because it is the most universal.† The heart is only moved by things which are common to all men: idiosyncracies, oddnesses, and exceptions, do not interest it. This constitutes the principal difference between the ancient and modern drama. The ancient drama takes for its subject the most universal passions of the human heart, such as love, maternal tenderness, jealousy, anger, and those passions which are simple. The modern drama, on the contrary, seeks for exceptions and bizareries of character with as much care as the ancient drama avoided them.

In the *Cid* and *Zaire*, for example, love is simple and natural. It is not astonishing that Chimene should love Rodrigo. His love would only have to struggle against honor, which requires her to avenge upon Rodrigo the death of her father. The subject of the drama is singular and extraordinary, but the passions are, on the contrary, simple and na-

* *Essais de Morale.*

† De cette passion la sensible peinture

Est pour aller au cœur, la route la plus sûr.

BOILEAU. *Art poétique.*

tural. In *Zaire*, the love which she has for Orasmene is ordinary and natural. The extraordinary is in the events, and in the struggle which they introduce between the love of *Zaire* and her respect for her father and his religion.

When the drama has exhausted the emotions which arise from simple love, it throws itself into those which are enthusiastic and eccentric. Then the singularity passes from events to sentiments; then commence the exceptions and caprices. Upon this road the declivity is slippery and the fall rapid. Racine, in *Phedra*, dared to represent an adulterous and incestuous love. *Phedra* blushes at her love for Hippolytus, and yet she is only his stepmother; she believes that her husband is dead, and yields to the power of Venus, *fatal to her family*. Campistron, going further than Racine, represents, in his *Tiridate*, the love of a brother for his sister. Ducis imitated without equalling him, in his *Abufar*; and Chateaubriand has caused the punishment of René to proceed from this criminal love. René has the restless and dreamy character which Lord Byron, after Chateaubriand, has given to his heroes, and which constitutes a school in literature, because he has permitted a strange and criminal passion to insinuate itself into their soul. It is this which throws them into that capricious and gloomy melancholy, for which Chateaubriand has made atonement, and which his imitators have made a sign of nobleness and grandeur. Indeed we may remark generally, that in ancient literature, *Phedra*, *Tiridate*, *Abufar*, René, and characters of this description, blush at their error, and that the rule is re-established by the remorse of the criminals; while, in our days, passion rebels against duty, and the exception is substituted for the rule.

The exceptions, such as *Abufar* and René, are the first attempts to represent strange and singular passions, instead of simple and natural ones. There is another refinement, which consists in putting love in a soul incapable of feeling it: as, for example, pure love in the bosom of a courtesan such as Marion de Lorme.* Not that such women are always incapable of feeling a pure and chaste love, but their habits do not generally admit of it. It is an accident, a contrast, and for this reason pleases curious and critical minds.

* See the play of Victor Hugo, the episode of Laura in the *Nouvelle Heloise* of J. J. Rousseau, and especially *La Courtisane Amoureuse* of La Fontaine.

This is what we mean by a spirit of curiosity and a taste for exception. A particular trait is seized, and a character is made of it. But the exceptions and curiosities in literature have two great faults, viz. monotony and exaggeration.

Exceptions and bizarreries soon become monotonous. Odd people are only amusing for an hour or two, because we become tired hearing their sentiments and ideas revolve in the same circle. Strange and singular characters, which it is the custom to introduce on the stage, and in romances, produce the same effect: they are tiresome because they are uniform, because their oddness is a kind of reservoir from which their thoughts and their actions are always drawn. There is, indeed, something worse than being like every body; it is that of being always the same. Ordinary people are better liked than monotonous people. Besides, oddness is easy to imitate. As it relates to a particular trait, as it consists in a detail, and not in things taken as a whole, it is easy to imitate and to reproduce it. The facility of imitation is in literature as in painting, the punishment of what is called *mannerism*.

The other fault of exceptions and singularities is, that they fall easily into exaggeration. When a dramatic author represents a simple and ordinary passion, he has a rule and a measure; he sees how the passions of men generally act, and he describes them just as he sees them. But when he represents a character or passion of exception, where is his rule and measure? Being forced to imagine what a man of this kind must do and say, he avoids the usual and common sentiments, that is to say, those which are real and natural. He believes that he cannot be too violent and passionate, and overleaps the object at which he aimed through fear of not being able to reach it. He then arrives at *mania*, which is, if we may so speak, the excess or sublime of the exceptional passions; and *mania* takes away from passion precisely that which causes it to be interesting. The passionate man affects us, because he touches and resembles us, because we were like him yesterday and might become so to-morrow. The maniac is an unfortunate one whom we send back to the madhouse, after the first glance of surprise and curiosity.

Let us not forget that the passions when they become exaggerated bear a strong resemblance to each other, and

that they no longer have a distinct name and character. Who can tell us when we enter a Theatre in the fifth act of a tragedy, and see the heroine a prey to a sort of convulsive frenzy ; when we hear her cries and her sobs ; when she wrings her hands and often falls down and rolls upon the stage,—who can tell us if it is love, anger, or grief which drives her to this excess ? The passions vary and differ from each other only when they are moderate : to each of them belongs a peculiar language and gesture ; then they become interesting on account of their diversity. When they are excessive they become uniform, and the exaggeration which they believe will exhibit the passion in bold relief, effaces and destroys it. The violence and wildness of the passions excite the senses rather than the mind ; and this leads us to the second condition of dramatic emotion.

The second requisite of dramatic emotion is, that it should address itself to the understanding and not to the senses. Art ought to speak only to the mind ; it is to the mind alone that it ought to give pleasure. If it seeks to excite the senses, it becomes degraded. This rule is applicable to all the arts. Even dancing is an art, when by steps and movements it pleases the soul, and creates in the mind the divine idea of gracefulness. It ceases to be an art and becomes a trade when it aims at exciting the passions. The arts are the language of the soul. If they are addressed to the senses, it is only for the purpose of recalling them to their proper vocation, which is that of being instrumental in enhancing the pleasures of the soul. They afford the greatest joy to man because they draw out all the faculties of his soul, because they occupy and fascinate at the same time his soul and his senses ; and in the pleasure which they procure, they render the emotion of the senses subordinate to that of the mind, thereby placing supreme order in pleasure. It is this which causes them to be divine.

Of all the emotions which arise from the arts and which proceed from the imitation of human nature, dramatic emotion is the most perfect. No art can more nearly resemble reality than the dramatic art ; and yet it is destroyed if it resembles it too closely and becomes confounded with it. Theatrical exhibitions should be the greatest of the illusions of art, but it must remain only an illusion.

The Greeks in order to be moved, were satisfied with

the fictions of their Theatre ; and it is that which constitutes their dramatic glory. They confined themselves within the limits of illusion. At Rome, on the contrary, the people required gross exhibitions. The melancholy and harmonious moans of a Philoctetes or an Œdipus did not touch the hearts of the Romans. They wanted to hear the cries of dying gladiators. Rome despised the petty terrors of the Greek tragedy and preferred the sports of the Circus, where men were fighting, wounding and killing each other, the arena red with blood and the earth shaken with the convulsions of the dying.

The literary education which we receive in modern society, does not always protect the soul from the grosser emotions of the body. In proportion as theatrical emotions become more common, the dramatic art becomes more gross ; and this is no longer confined to the upper classes of society, but it finds in spite of it its level among its auditory. There are two kinds of men who are capable of preferring the brutal pleasures of the Circus to the noble illusions of the Theatre : those whose minds are not cultivated, and those which are too highly cultivated,—the ignorant and the refined. They commence with the sensual emotions, and satiety soon succeeding, leads to brutality. It is said, that when the spectator first witnesses the Bull-fight in Spain, he trembles with horror, but after a short time becomes so fascinated that he can scarcely turn away his eyes. There is indeed in the sight of danger and suffering an irresistible attraction for men ; but it is this emotion which we must endeavor to purify by the assistance of art, in restraining it within the limit of illusion.

St. Augustine in his *Confessions** has admirably described the cruel pleasure which man experiences in witnessing physical suffering. One of his friends named Alipius had for a long time abandoned the exhibitions of the Circus. One day while at Rome, some of his friends wished him to see a fight between two gladiators. He at first refused, but they prevailed upon him, and he went. Having arrived at the Theatre, he sat down on a bench in the midst of his friends, and closed his eyes. He remained in this position for some time, when all at once the spectators commenced a great shouting. It was a gladiator who had just fallen,

* *Confessions*, b. vi. ch. viii.

and overcome by curiosity he opened his eyes. "His soul," says St. Augustine, "received a severer wound than the gladiator who was just struck. The sight of blood which flowed, filled his soul with cruel pleasure. He wished to turn away his eyes, but felt them fixed upon this palpitating body. His soul in spite of him became intoxicated with sanguinary joy."

The Greeks themselves, the chosen people of the arts, finally adopted gladiatorial combats. Antiochus Epiphanes, one of those Asiatic kings who had all the caprice and strange humors which are created by want of occupation and the possession of absolute power, wished to introduce gladiatorial sports. But this kind of exhibition causing at first more terror than pleasure to the Greeks at Antioch,* who were not accustomed to the sports of the Roman people, Antiochus, in order to overcome this repugnance, at first made the gladiators stop as soon as blood was shed, but afterwards permitted them to continue to the death; and by degrees the Greeks acquired such a taste for these spectacles, that the king had no further occasion to send to Rome for gladiators. But from this time the dramatic art among the Greeks began to decline, and the Roman Circus took the place of the Greek Theatre. They had different kinds of gladiators, as we have different sorts of actors. They executed manœuvres, movements and steps, as they do in our *ballets*; they fought in time and cadence; but their chief pleasure was derived from witnessing the exhibition of physical suffering. When the spectators saw that the gladiators were disposed to avoid a severe conflict, they became enraged, and cursed them; but when they fought bravely, they applauded them, and by their cries kept up their courage† until they fell, pierced with mortal wounds. The despair of the gladiators became proverbial at Rome;‡ but this despair, giving violence to the

* Livy, book xli. chap. xx.

† Quos si animadverterint esse concordes tum eos oderunt et persequuntur, et tanquam collusores ut fustibus verberenter exclamant. Si autem horrendas adversus invicem inimicitias eos exercere cognoverint, quo majore adversus invicem discordia furere senserit, eo magis amant eo delectantur, et incitatis favent, et faventes incitant. . . . St. AUGUSTINE, *De Catechizandis rudibus*.

‡ Jam de se desperans, jam habens quasi gladiatorium animum.—St. AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes en Psalmos*.

gestures, cries, and blows of the gladiators, increased the emotion of the spectator.

When the Theatre causes the emotions of the body to prevail over those of the mind, it resembles the Circus ; but it very soon undergoes a speedy decline. The emotions which proceed from the body are limited and monotonous : we soon become familiar with the tragical contortions of exaggerated passions ; we quickly perceive that those cries of agony which at first strike the ear with surprise and terror, always sound the same. It is upon this rock that all the arts must be wrecked which go out of the circle of moral illusion to enter within the circle of material imitation. Material nature is much more limited than moral nature, either for enjoyment or suffering. The soul, in its griefs, is patient, and exhibits its pains in various ways, because it is immortal ; while the body, after suffering for a short time, knows only how to die ; it is the only variety which it can put in its griefs, and hence also the barrenness and monotony of material sufferings which we witness on the stage.

These reflections lead us to show how the ancient Theatre expressed the emotions which are caused by physical suffering, and the fear of death ; and how the modern Theatre expresses them. It is with this that we propose to commence our lectures upon the employment of the passions in the drama.

II.

HOW THE ANCIENT THEATRE EXPRESSED THE EMOTIONS WHICH ARE CAUSED BY PHYSICAL SUFFERING AND THE FEAR OF DEATH—HOW THE MODERN THEATRE EXPRESSES THEM—THE IPHIGENIA OF RACINE—ANGELO, TYRANT OF PADUA, BY VICTOR HUGO.

EACH sentiment has its history, and this history is curious, because it is, if we may so speak, an abridged history of humanity. Although the feelings of the human heart do not undergo any permanent change, yet they feel the effect of the religious and political revolutions which are going on in the world. They retain their nature, but change their expression; and it is in studying these changes of expression that the literary critic writes, without designing it, the history of the world.

The love of life is the strongest and most universal sentiment of the human heart.

"Better be a peasant alive than an emperor dead," says the fabulist;* and in speaking thus he was only relating the conversation of Achilles and Ulysses in Hades. "Achilles," said Ulysses, "you were once honored as a god among the living, and even now you command the dead: you cannot regret life." "Ulysses," replied Achilles, "do not seek to console me for my death: I would rather be a poor laborer, and gain my living under some poor master who would not always have enough food to provide me, than to command here these lifeless shadows."† So sweet a thing is life! This regret of life, which the poets attributed to their dying heroes, had nothing timid or weak: it was affecting without being pusillanimous.

Two kinds of men who are not always the most faithful

* LA FONTAINE. *La Matrone d'Ephese*.

† *Odyssey*.

interpreters of human nature, the Satiric poets* and the Philosophers—the one, because they viewed the world on its dark side, and the other, because they wished to make a methodical and regular system of the human affections,—had already among the Greeks censured the weakness of dying heroes. Plato accused them of enervating their souls by their complaints, and Cicero, a disciple and translator of the Greek philosophers, commends old Pacuvius for having in his play, entitled *Ulysses Wounded*, in imitation of Sophocles, given to his dying hero a firmness and constancy worthy of the stoicism of Rome. † The ancient French dramatists seem to have been in this respect of the opinion of Cicero rather than Sophocles: their heroes and heroines die with an admirable magnanimity. The haughtiness of their sentiments restrains pity, and in seeing them renounce life with so much indifference, in spite of ourselves we acquire a cold insensibility. The influence which the ancient philosophy had on the dramatic poets, the example of the Christian martyrs, and above all, the sentiment of honor, concurred in establishing the firmness of our tragic heroes. The point of honor which arose from the habits of military life and of that fearless contempt of death which characterized the Germanic nations, has contributed much towards the firmness of the heroes of the modern stage. Each age gives to its dramatic personages the kind of courage which it prizes most. When the sort of courage which braves death is held in greatest esteem, when it is by this standard that we measure men, Achilles and Ajax, if they appeared upon the stage, would not be less audacious and high-spirited than a musketeer or a grenadier; it would be even necessary, by virtue of their title of hero, that they should be a little more so. Hence their contempt of death pushed to exaggeration; hence their blusterings about their intrepidity and resignation!

The modern drama has endeavored to correct the tragic

* See how Aristophanes, in his *Frogs*, ridicules the heroes of Euripides who weep and lament.

† Cicero, in his *Tusculan Questions*, b. ii. ch. xiii., censures the Philoctetes of Sophocles for giving way to grief:

“Hoc quidem in dolore maxime providendum est, ne quid abjecte, ne quid timide, ne quid ignave, ne quid serviliter muliebriter ve faciamus; imprimis que refutetur ac rejiciatur Philoctetæus ille clamor. Ingemiscere non nunquam viro concessum est, id que raro: ejulatus, ne mulieri quidem.”

heroes of this philosophic, chivalric and Christian magnanimity which wearied the spectator without interesting him. We will notice the different expressions of the sentiments of the love of life from the days of the Greeks to our own times; and in order to accomplish this purpose to best advantage, we will select a few of the characters of the ancient and modern drama.

There were on the Greek stage, three maidens sacrificed in the bloom of their youth; the Antigone of Sophocles, the Iphigenia and Polyxena of Euripides. None of them in dying affect courage and firmness; none of them are lavish of their youth and hopes; none of them are ashamed of weeping, and yet all are resigned. It is this which constitutes the crowning glory of the Greek art; it excites pity without exhausting it; it mingles sorrow and resignation in the plaints of its victims, in order that they may inspire at the same time pity and respect, and that these two sentiments may temper each other in the bosom of the spectator. The Greek art always seeks to maintain a just equilibrium between these two emotions. Thus Antigone in openly disobeying the law of Creon, which prohibited the burial of the body of Polynice, has shown more firmness than belongs to a young maiden; Sophocles, fearing that we may have less pity for her, seeing her so courageous, has given to her regrets for life something heart-rending. Antigone is almost a martyr, since she prefers to obey the divine law rather than the human; but she has not the resignation of a martyr: now she weeps, because she will have no more nuptial songs, nor sweet marriage, nor dear children; and at other times, she accuses the Thebans of baseness, and the gods of indifference. The chorus also, which in the ancient tragedy expresses the sentiments which the poet wishes to excite in the breast of the spectator, remarks with horror the frightful tempest which agitates her soul. Sophocles has prolonged the agony of Antigone only with a view to temper with pity the admiration which her courage inspired.

Less brave and less bold, the Iphigenia of Euripides does not require so much effort to move us to pity. There is therefore in her complaints nothing violent or agitated. She regrets to part with life; she does not fear to express her dread of death; she also mourns over her youth, which was blooming with fond anticipations; she was, in a word, as af-

fecting by the sweetness of her lamentations, as Antigone was by the violence of her despair.

Polyxena is more resigned than Antigone and Iphigenia ; for she has lost her father and her country, and if she lived, it would be only to become a slave ; there could be no husband for her except a slave like herself. She had then no fear of death : she resigned herself to it without ostentation, arrogance or stoicism. She only regretted the care which she would have bestowed upon Hecuba ; she dies a timid and chaste virgin, without complaining, and thinks in the act of falling only of arranging her garments—the last trait of modesty in her last moments.

In Seneca, on the other hand, Polyxena becomes fearless and wild ; her magnanimity borders on madness, and she terrifies Pyrrhus who is about to sacrifice her.*

Thus we have seen that all three lament their premature death, regret to part with life, and yet are finally resigned to their fate. Thus are mingled the love of life with the feeling of resignation and firmness, thereby giving a faithful representation of the human heart, which is at once both weak and strong, timid and brave.

The entreaty which the Iphigenia of Euripides makes to her father to dissuade him from sacrificing her, is full of touching simplicity and grace :

“ My father,” says she, “ if I had the tongue of Orpheus, if I had the eloquence and persuasiveness which could attract rocks, if I could by my supplications enchant whom I wish, I would now avail myself of them ; but I have no other art but my tears, which I cannot refrain from shedding. Permit me as a suppliant to prostrate at your knees this body destined to so sudden a death ; and which my mother brought forth with so much pain. Do not compel me to die before my time : the light is so pleasant to see, do not make me descend into the subterranean shades. It was I who first called you father ; I who, seated upon your knees, received and returned your caresses. You said to me then : ‘ How proud I will be to see you, my daughter, contented and happy in the house of your husband ; ’ I replied in patting your chin with my hands as I do now : ‘ My father, when you become old, I

* *Audax virago non tulit utro gradum
Conversa ad ictum stat, truci vultu ferox.*

SENECA.

will receive you under my roof, and will return you the kindness which I received from you.'—I still remember these conversations, but you have forgotten them, since you wish me to die. No, my father, in the name of Pelops and Atreus; in the name of my mother who suffered so much at my birth, and who suffers still more cruelly now, I beseech you no! And what have I to do with the faults of Paris and Helen? Why is Helen fatal to me? If you will not be moved by my words, I pray you, give me a last look and kiss, so that I may at least have this farewell remembrance of you before I die. My brothers, who are still young, entreat you to pardon their sister. Spare me, take pity on me! My father, nothing is more agreeable to mortals than to see the day. No person desires the night of Hades. It is madness to wish to die. A miserable life is better than a glorious death."

Neither the allusion to the eloquence of Orpheus, which serves as an exordium to this discourse, nor the sententious maxim which concludes it, are in good taste; they partake too much of the rhetorical art, which was warmly cherished and assiduously cultivated by the Greeks. But the happy mixture of natural sentiments and mournful reflections render this supplication exceedingly touching. We see how revolting to the instinct of youth is the idea of death!

The Iphigenia of Racine is more resigned and magnanimous. She is afraid to say that she loves, and that she regrets to part with life, that the light of day is pleasant to see, and that the darkness of death is horrible.

. . . My father, [*says she to Agamemnon,*]
 Cease to trouble yourself, you are not betrayed;
 When you command, you shall be obeyed.
 My life is your gift, if you wish to take it back
 Your orders shall be rigidly fulfilled.
 With a contented and submissive heart
 I will accept the husband whom you have promised me.
 I will, if you require it, as an obedient victim,
 Offer my innocent head to the stroke of Calchas;
 And respecting the blow, since it is ordered by you,
 Render back to you all the blood which you have given me.
 If, however, this respect, if this obedience
 Seems worthy in your eyes of another recompense;
 If you pity the sorrows of a weeping woman,
 I dare to say that in the state in which I am,

Perhaps sufficient honors surround my life
To prevent my desire that it should be taken from me.
Daughter of Agamemnon, it is I who first,
My lord, called you by the sweet name of father ;
It is I who, so long the delight of your eyes,
Caused you to thank the gods for this name,
And for whom, so often prodigal of your caresses,
You have not disdained the infirmities of blood.
Alas ! with pleasure I began to tell you
All the names of the countries which you were going to subdue ;
And already foreseeing the conquest of Troy,
I prepared the festival of so glorious a triumph.
I did not expect, that to commence it,
My blood would be the first which you would shed !

In this modest submission we perceive the Christian virgin who fears to show too great an attachment to the joys of life, and the martyr who consents to die without regret, and to sacrifice her grief to paternal authority. We see here the effect which Christianity produces on the human heart ; how it restrains and consoles it even at the very moment of death, when nature would seem to allow of some last expression of regret. This reserve is more virtuous, but it is less dramatic.

Besides the difference of feelings there is also a striking difference between the ideas of the Iphigenia of Racine, and the Iphigenia of Euripides. The modern Iphigenia, daughter of the King of kings and destined for the hand of Achilles, thinks of the honors which surround her. It is only the daughter of Agamemnon, the most powerful king of Greece, who can speak like the Iphigenia of Racine ; there is no young maiden who is about to die, that cannot repeat the verses of the Antique Iphigenia, for her regrets are addressed to the most universal and pleasant goods of life, to the light, to the beauty of the heavens, to the joy which comes from nature ; to those pleasures in which all eagerly participate, without the portion of any one being diminished. In this lies the characteristic feature of the love of life among the ancients. Their greatest charm in life was nature ; what pleases the modern most is society. "Adieu," said the Count of Egmont when about to die, "adieu, sweet life, agreeable habit of being and acting." And in speaking thus, Goethe believed that his hero spoke at once as an ancient and as a modern ; and that he regretted at the same time both nature and society. These abstract and dull

words, *being* and *acting*, are not the beautiful and luminous images which the ancients adored in dying. Ajax could have regretted his arms, his battles, his glory, his misfortunes, and all that which in our opinion constitutes life. "Adieu, brilliant light of day," says he, "Sun, whose radiant beams my eyes will never again behold; and you, Salamis, sacred soil of my native land, I salute also your domestic firesides; and you, beautiful and glorious Athens, my ally, the country of my adoption; and you, ye fountains and flowers; and you also, ye fields of Troy which have contributed to my pleasures; I bid you all a long and last farewell!" Compare these words with those of Hamlet in Shakspeare, moralizing on life when about to die:

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his *quietus* make
With a bare bodkin!

We see how differently they die in the North and in the South: in the North, bidding adieu to man and to society with feelings of scorn and contempt; in the South, bidding adieu to nature with sentiments full of love and regret.

There was no less difference between the Theatre in which Hamlet expresses his melancholy doubts, and that in which Ajax offered to the beauty and freshness of the waters his brilliant and mournful adieu, than there is between their words. The antique Theatre was not a confined and gloomy hall, illumined by the sickly glare of lamps, where the tragic hero, when he speaks of the sun, raises his eyes towards a light now brilliant and now of a dubious lustre; and when he invokes heaven, beholds a ceiling of painted wood, below and around which are tumultuous assemblages of noisy spectators. The ancient theatre was placed on the slope of a hill, with the heavens for a canopy, and the mountains and the sea as decorations. When Ajax, upon such a Theatre, bade farewell for the last time to the sun and the gorgeous light of day, the sun *really* shone down from the heavens, and threw a halo of glory around the dying visage of the hero and the sorrow-stricken countenances of the spectators. "Salamis! sacred soil of my native land!" exclaimed Ajax; and all the spectators could see Salamis and its glorious gulf.

There it stood in the midst of the waves which still murmured the name of Themistocles, there stood the island which the sun gilds with its light, and the history of its associations, with all that its name and its prospect spoke to the hearts of the Athenians. "Beautiful and glorious Athens, sweet sister of my country!" said the hero; and he not only said that in Athens, but Athens was directly under his eyes. In full prospect was the cloud-capped Acropolis, on the side of which is built the Theatre of Bacchus. On the summit of the rock is the Parthenon, the Temple of Erytheus and the Sanctuary of Victory, *which has no wings* to fly away from Athens. On the right hand is the road which leads to Munychium and to Piræus; on the left rolls the Illyssus with its whispering stream, and interspersed here and there are sacred fountains, which Ajax also salutes in dying. The most beautiful country which eyes ever beheld; mountains which are transfigured with a crown of light; sunny islands and azure seas, which compose the most lovely mixture of land and water of which the imagination of man can conceive; fountains whose waters are as pure as the air which they refreshen; rivers whose margins are strewed with the verdure of summer, with the blossoms of laurels and roses; and over all is suspended a gorgeous and transparent sky, beautifying with purple and golden tints a country where art and nature possess a beauty and a grace which need no borrowed light,—are the decorations of the Antique Theatre which delighted the eyes of the spectators, while the verses of Sophocles and Euripides enraptured their minds!

It would be necessary then, when we compare the personages of the French drama with those of the Greek, to consider all the differences which arise from the form and arrangement of their Theatres, no less than those which are created by diversity of times, institutions and climate.

The easy resignation of the modern Iphigenia detracts from the pity which she inspires. There is a scene, however, where the resignation becomes truly touching and dramatic: it is when, addressing herself to Achilles, she wishes to appease his wrath against Agamemnon:

Heaven has not [*says she**] to the days of this unfortunate
Attached the happiness of your destiny.

* RACINE. *Iphigenia*, act v. scene ii.

Our love deceived us ; and the decrees of fate
 Will this happiness to be a fruit of my death.
 Think, my lord, think of these harvests of glory
 Which victory offers to your valiant hands.
 This glorious field, to which you all aspire,
 If my blood does not water it, is barren for you.
 Such is the law of the gods dictated to my father.
 In vain, deaf to Calchas, he had rejected it ;
 By the mouth of the Greeks conspired against me,
 Their eternal orders are too clearly manifested.
 Go ! to your honors I oppose too many obstacles.
 Redeem the faith of your oracles ;
 Signalize this hero who has been promised to Greece ;
 Turn your grief against his enemies.
 Already Priam grows pale ; already Troy in alarms,
 Dreads my sacrifice and groans at your tears.
 Go ! and within its empty walls
 Cause the Trojan widows to bewail my death.
 I die in this hope contented and tranquil !
 If I have not lived the consort of Achilles,
 I hope at least that a happy future
 Will unite my memory with your immortal deeds ;
 And that one day my death, the source of your glory,
 Will open the recital of a glorious history.
 Adieu, prince, may you long live, a race worthy of the gods !

We see in this not only resignation, but devotion ; and this devotion becomes dear to Iphigenia when she thinks that it is to the glory of Achilles that she is about to be sacrificed. Resignation is a *virtue*, devotion is often a *passion*, and it is that which constitutes its dramatic superiority. The courage of Iphigenia as a lover, affects us more than her courage as a maiden, because the human heart does not like to see virtue exhibited on the stage, relying upon its own excellence, and deriving all its strength from its own intrinsic power. But when virtue sustains itself against one passion by the aid of another, when it overcomes the fear of death by the ardor of devotion, then we are willing to support virtue and even to permit ourselves to be affected by it. The Christian martyrs, for instance, although they were but a little dramatic in general, are yet more so than the dying Stoics, such as Cato and Thræseas.

The love of life constitutes the basis of the character of the Iphigenia in Euripides. The sentiment of resignation and obedience that of the Iphigenia of Racine. But what we

remark in the two poets is, that the two sentiments are mingled although in unequal doses, if we may use the expression ; and this mixture of opposite sentiments shows how the two poets understood dramatic effect. They knew that one sentiment alone, an *exclusive* sentiment, was not sufficient to produce emotion. It may produce a *scene*, but not a *character*.

Let us see how Victor Hugo has expressed this sentiment of the love of life in his drama of *Angelo*.

The modern Theatre, and it is one of its merits, has perceived how cold and monotonous was the disdain of life which was the usual burden of the complaint of dying heroes : he has wished to approximate to the Greek ; he has not feared to express this fear of death which Sophocles gave to his *Antigone* and Euripides to his *Iphigenia*. How has he done it ? Has he attained his object ; or has he gone beyond it ? This question we will briefly examine by the aid of an example.

Angelo, a tyrant of Padua, knows that Catarina, his wife, loves the young Rodolfo ; he knows that she has received him in her house. He enters her chamber and announces to her that she must die : she can choose between steel and poison. She seems at first to be resigned, and approaches the table, on which is lying a vial ; then suddenly shrinking back, she exclaims : " No, it is horrible ! I am not willing ! I can never suffer it ! But think a little while you have the time. You who are all-powerful, reflect ! A woman, a woman who is alone, abandoned, who has no strength, who is without defence, who has no parents here, no family, no friends, nobody ! To assassinate her ! To poison her in a shameful manner in a corner of her own house !—My mother ! My mother ! My mother ! Do not tell me to have courage, I pray you ! I am forced to have courage ! I am not ashamed of being a weak and pitiable woman ! I weep because death terrifies me. It is not my fault."

Certainly the sentiments which Catarina expresses are true and natural. We feel in these words a horror of death and the love of life ; but we understand in this scene the cry of the body in agony, and not the cry of the soul. It is the flesh which revolts against death ; but it is an entirely material and physical revolt, in which the soul takes no part. We witness the sensations of one condemned to death ; we see the flesh quiver, the countenance grow pale, and the limbs tremble ; we witness an *agony*. But why is material death

alone represented? Why are the most noble and elevated emotions of the dying man suppressed; those which are addressed to the real pity of men, the pity which is mingled with admiration and respect, and not that which borders on disgust? We love to hear Iphigenia regret *the light so pleasant to see*; we love her fear of the *subterranean shades*; we are touched with her regrets for life; but in her complaints there is something besides the physical and material fear of death; and when she resigns herself, what nobleness! what dignity! How profoundly affecting is this last look and kiss which she wishes to snatch from her father! How that resignation touches our hearts without being a source of uneasiness and pain! There is certainly truth in the shrieks of Catarina, but it is a truth which, if we may so speak, comes in the order of the truths of natural history. In the complaints of Iphigenia, there is a truth more human and more noble.

We will introduce a historical reminiscence, illustrative of the two kinds of dramatic emotion which we have endeavored to portray.

During the French Revolution, in 1794, a woman was conducted from prison to the guillotine. Placed in the same fatal cart with her companions in misfortune, Madame Roland had a brow as smooth and a countenance as calm as when she was in her drawing-room in the midst of the Girondists. Haughty, and braving with disdain the insults of the sanguinary mob, she exclaimed in ascending the scaffold, "O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!" Always dignified and majestic, she died in this manner without complaining, without agitation, without uttering any cries or convulsions of agony. Were the populace affected? No. They did not comprehend the tranquil beauty of this death.

A few days afterwards, another woman was taken from prison to the scaffold; this was Madame DuBarry. This unfortunate woman, who had learned courage and dignity only at the supper parties of Louis XV., uttered frightful screams, being unable to resign herself to the idea of dying; and upon the scaffold she cried out, "Mr. Executioner, will you spare me a little moment?" This little miserable moment was not granted her, and her head fell upon the ground with her mouth wide open. The populace were affected at this. This convulsion and palpitating agony, this struggle for life, struck them and moved them to pity. They understood this kind of tragedy.

III.

OF MAN'S STRUGGLES WITH PHYSICAL PAIN—THE PHILOCTETES OF SOPHOCLES—A SCENE IN THE ROMANCE OF NOTRE DAME DE PARIS, BY VICTOR HUGO.

SINCE the introduction of Christianity, literature and the drama have become essentially spiritual. In the age in which we live, literature, without ceasing to take moral suffering for its subject, has pushed this suffering even to physical pain. It has materialized moral grief, while the Greeks who represented physical pain, idealized it by the aid of the beautiful. They elevated themselves from the body to the mind: we follow the opposite direction. They advanced by degrees towards Christian spiritualism; while we seem to have retrograded towards Pagan materialism.

We will endeavor to explain these observations by a few examples.

We *love* beauty, we do not *adore* it. The Greeks loved and idolized it. They had no gods but those which were beautiful. Pluto himself was beautiful, although he was the god of Hades. When the Greeks represented man, they had the same regard to his beauty: their painters and statuaries only represented men who were handsome. "Who wants to paint you," said an old epigram, "when nobody wants to see you?" They had a horror of taking portraits; that is, the likeness of every one who desired it. So far did they carry this aversion, that even the conquerors at the Olympic games, who had a right to a statue, did not obtain an *iconic* one, that is, a perfect likeness, until they had obtained three victories!

With this aversion for the *ugly*, they never represented the excess of passion: Extreme pain and extreme anger produce contortion, and contortion disfigures. Timanthes, in

his picture of the Sacrifice of Iphigenia, veiled the head of Agamemnon ; not that he despaired, as they say, of being able to render a faithful expression of such grief, but because he could do so only by giving to the countenance of the hero an agitation which would have disfigured it. Sculpture has represented the children of Niobe, some already dead and others expiring ; the former pierced by fatal darts in their flight, the latter in the act of supplication ; Niobe herself protecting with her own body her last and youngest daughter, for whom she in vain implores the mercy of the gods, whom the arrow of Diana has stricken between her arms. But none of them have a disordered attitude or a violent gesture ; their countenances, and we might almost say that their bodies* express supplication, suffering, terror, and even death, with remarkable truthfulness, and at the same time with an admirable dignity and consistency. Niobe herself, this mother who sees her children perish, is beautiful and majestic, because the statuary has seized the moment when, having still a daughter whom she entreats the gods to leave her, she has not yet reached the excess of grief ; he has avoided the moment when Niobe, seated among the dead bodies of her fourteen children who have perished before her eyes, would have abandoned herself to despair. In fact, while there is still some hope in grief, the soul, and consequently the human countenance, preserve a kind of equilibrium and proportion ; and it is this which constitutes the moral and material beauty which the Greek art wished to express.

And let us not believe that the antique poetry was more disposed than sculpture or painting to represent the passions in their moments of excess ; she had the same scruples. Thus when Niobe had reached the last degree of anguish, poetry, instead of doing violence to art in representing the disorder of this distracted mother, changes her into a rock ; she preferred to *metamorphose* man rather than to disfigure him. The antique imagination (for poetry was only the interpreter of the popular imagination) believed that when the passion was excessive, the man disappeared ; a just and profound

* In Greek statuary, the *expression*, instead of being concentrated in the face, as in modern statuary, is spread over the whole body ; and nudity is for Greek sculpture not a habit borrowed from the climate, (since the Greeks were clad), but a resource of art in order the better to express the ideas and sentiments of their subjects.

idea which lies at the basis of what we now call the philosophy of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. Hecuba, when she happens to meet the body of Polypus on the sea-shore, the last-born and the last-dead of her fifty children, the only one whom she believed she had saved from the ruins of Troy, she is no longer a woman and a queen. Do you hear those melancholy and furious howlings? Poetry has at once expressed and concealed in this metamorphosis the despair of Hecuba.* As soon as a passion exceeded the strength or capacity of the human heart, ancient poetry had recourse to prodigy; it preferred a miracle to exaggeration. She changed Biblis into a fountain, because she despaired of ever being able to express the anguish of incestuous and abominable love; she changed Halcyon into a bird, because she did not believe that words could adequately express the despair of the widow of Ceyx. In fine, whoever was carried by passion beyond the limits of humanity, lost in the ancient fable the countenance and features of a man.

The antique art, whether it be that with admirable propriety it selects the moment which precedes the excess of passion, or going beyond this moment and not stopping there, it reaches the marvellous, which envelopes all under its shadow; the antique art had a greater influence on the imagination than modern art, which is compelled to express the extravagance of the passions. The pretension of modern art is to say every thing. What would then remain for the imagination of the public to exercise itself upon? It is often best to leave it to the spectator to complete the idea of the poet or the sculptor.

Sophocles in *Philoctetes* did not fear to represent physical pain; but it would be a great error to believe that he has chosen this subject from his taste for the ugly, which has been for some time past one of the manias of modern literature. He has found in the tradition, *Philoctetes* wounded by a serpent, abandoned by the Greeks in the Isle of Lemnos, and making the rocks re-echo with the cries which his pain extort-

* Priameia conjux
 Perdidit infelix hominis, post omnia, formam;
 Externas que novo latratu terruit auras.
 —Veterum que diu mem̄or illa malorum,
 Tum quoque Sithonios ululavit mæsta per agros.
 [OVID. *Met.*, b. xiii.]

ed from him ; and he respected the tradition. Cicero censures Sophocles not for having permitted his hero to utter some feeble complaints, but for having terrified the whole island with his groans.* Suppressed groans do not produce much effect on the stage. What we admire, on the contrary, in the drama, is the art of the poet who has left to the hero his wound, his cries, and the mournful accompaniments of physical suffering, but who has also given to his hero the moral passions which counterbalance the emotions which the sight of his sufferings creates. This wounded man does not only think of his wounds ; he hates Ulysses and the Atrides who have abandoned him on this desert isle ; and were he even to obtain his cure under the walls of Troy, he would not carry the victorious arrows of Hercules to the Atrides. His hatred does not only give evidence of the energy which his soul has preserved in spite of his sufferings : he regrets his father, his country, and the pleasant banks of the Sperchius ; he bewails the death of Achilles and Ajax, and Neoptolemus is astonished that Philoctetes, in pain and exile, should still have tears for the misfortunes of another. At last, when he leaves his isle and his cavern, so long the witnesses of his grief, he does not leave them with hatred and impatience as the sick man leaves his bed ; he bids adieu to the rocks which afforded him shelter, to the fountains which quenched his thirst, and to the sea whose waves came to grieve as if in sympathy at the base of his rock. Thus we see that so far from the soul of this sick man being insensible, so far from physical suffering detracting from his moral emotion, Philoctetes feels acutely, anger, hatred, regret, affection, all the sentiments in short which fill the human heart. Physical pain does not constitute the dramatic interest of Philoctetes ; on the contrary, the ascendant which his moral nature has over his material is the distinguishing trait in his character. This ascendant, it is true, is not employed in subduing passion as a philosopher would do ; but what proves best that Philoctetes has preserved his moral energy, are these words : "Come," said Neoptolemus, "come to those who will cure you." "Never," replied Philoctetes, "never will I go to those who have abandoned me." Propose to a sick man, and

* *Quamobrem turpe putandum est, non dico dolore, (nam quid interdum est necesse), sed saxum illud lemnium clamore Philoctetæ funestare.—CICERO. De finibus, b. ii.*

especially to one who has suffered for a long time, to cure him on condition that he will forgive his enemies, and you will see with what willingness he will accept the offer which Philoctetes refuses. Philosophy blames with reason the use or rather the abuse of so much firmness for the support of hatred, but the Theatre excuses it.

See with what courage Philoctetes resists the attacks of the malady which is killing him.

Neoptolemus.—Why do you remain silent and stupefied?

Philoctetes.—Ah! alas!

Neop.—What ails you?

Ph.—Nothing, my son; go, I will follow you.

Neop.—Is it an access of your malady?

Ph.—No, I believe that it is better. O gods!

Neop.—Why do you call upon the gods in groaning thus?

Ph.—I beg them to be propitious to us. Ah! alas!

Neop.—What ails you? You say nothing. Why do you keep silent? You seem to suffer.

Ph.—Ah! my son, I am lost; I can no longer conceal from you my disease. O what torture! It glides into my veins! I feel it! I am wretched! I am dying! It is devouring me.

His sufferings have overcome him in spite of his struggles; he falls down exhausted and is about to sleep. But, before sleeping, he requests Neoptolemus and the chorus not to abandon him. The unfortunate man always remembers that it is thus that the Greeks abandoned him. Then the chorus approach him with Neoptolemus, and demand of the gods to send the sick man sleep to alleviate his pains, by chanting these words: "Sleep, soother of our pains, come with thy sweetest breath! God of calmness and peace, close his eyes to the brilliant rays of the sun! Come, O sleep, remedy of our evils!" Philoctetes soon wakes up. This waking up of the sick man, relieved from his pains and recognizing the cares which he has received, is full of affectionate and tender sentiments. "Sweet sleep, faithful guests! no, my son, I would never have believed that you had enough pity and courage to support my pains, to assist and succor me!" This alternation of pleasant and painful emotions—this mixture of the effects of moral and material nature, constitutes the irresistible charm of this masterpiece of Sophocles.

Let us not forget the admirable simplicity of the Greek poet—simplicity in the subject. A vessel which arrives at

the deserted shores of Lemnos; Neoptolemus seeking the cavern in which Philoctetes lives abandoned since ten years; the meeting between Neoptolemus and Philoctetes; Philoctetes entreating Neoptolemus to take him with him to Scyros; the fit of the malady which overwhelms him; the embarrassment of Neoptolemus, who does not dare to tell Philoctetes that he wishes to convey him, not to Scyros, but to Troy; the anger and the hatred of the hero, who refuses to hear the advice of Ulysses; the entreaties of Neoptolemus, who yields only to the divine orders of Hercules. This is the whole subject of the tragedy of Sophocles, of which the action is clear and rapid, and of which the incidents arise only from the sentiments of the personages. There is no less simplicity in the expression than in the action. Hear Philoctetes relate how he has lived since the day the Greeks abandoned him in this desert isle.

“In order to live, I killed with my arrows the doves which flew near my cavern, and when I killed a bird, I dragged myself, with my lame foot, to go to pick up my prey. If I wanted water, or to gather wood, when the frosts of winter arrived, I had to crawl to get it. When my fire gave out, I was compelled to strike two pieces of stone against each other, and the fire alone has preserved me.”

We see no circumlocution in this narrative, no affected ornaments, as in La Harpe, who has translated Philoctetes as simply as he could, but who was not able to forget entirely the style and taste of his time. Thus, for instance, in Sophocles, the doves fly near the cavern of Philoctetes, and it is there that the unfortunate man, who cannot go farther, kills them. In La Harpe, he shoots

. a swift arrow,
Which causes the timid bird to fall from a great height.

In Sophocles, Philoctetes drags himself near a spring in order to drink; he drags himself in order to pick up wood. In La Harpe, instead of picking up wood, *he breaks the branches*; and instead of drinking the running water at its source, he extracts an unpleasant beverage from the icicles which whiten the shore.

Such is the Philoctetes of Sophocles, in which the moral and material emotions are combined with wonderful art, and create an equilibrium between each other. This pity which

we feel for his physical sufferings is relieved by a still more noble and elevated feeling, the pity of the soul, which inspires us with emotions of joy and gratitude, and even of anger and hatred. With this art of causing the passions to temper each other, excess, and consequently moral or physical contortion, becomes impossible.

Thus the Greeks did not fear to express physical suffering, but they subjected it to the laws of the beautiful. Philosophy and the arts combined to make moral nature prevail over material nature; the arts, by the worship of the beautiful, which exists only in repose, and the repose of the body proceeds from that of the soul; philosophy, by instilling the idea that the mind is superior to the body. This progressive ascendancy of the mind over the body prepared the world for the reception of Christianity, and by an admirable harmony the worship of the *beautiful* led men to the worship of the good.

Since the promulgation of the Gospel, we believe in the superiority of the soul over the body; but the struggle between them did not cease. In antiquity, literature, notwithstanding the materialism which constituted the basis of religion, had succeeded, under the influence of philosophy, to give the preference to the mind over the body. In our days literature seems to have taken a contrary direction: not that in France modern literature has often sought to represent material suffering on the stage. When by chance we introduce a malady, we prefer those which are more closely connected with moral pain, whether they proceed from it, or whether they imitate it; as, for instance, madness, the spleen, &c. In the infirmities we follow the same process: we represent deafness or dumbness, which seem to excite the understanding by the very obstacles which they create for it. The present literature is spiritual in the choice of its subjects; but it is material in its expression.

Formerly the expression of the feelings was derived from the sentiments of nature. It had something pure and elevated; often it was even too abstract. Each sentiment of the soul had, if we may so speak, a corresponding sensation. But never did the word which was employed to express the *sensation*, ever take the place of the word which expressed the *sentiment*; in short, it was the human soul, and not the body, which literature strove to place in relief. Nowadays

we no longer wish to delineate the sentiments of the human heart ; we wish, if we may so speak, to sculpture them ; and as by the delicacy of their nature, they escape the chisel of the Michael Angelos of literature, it becomes necessary for them to substitute sensation in the place of sentiment.

This preponderance of sensation over sentiment is one of the most remarkable effects of modern style. We do not represent as our predecessors did, hatred, anger, jealousy, love, maternal tenderness, as passions of the soul, but as passions of the body : we materialize them, believing that we thereby make them stronger ; we make them brutal, supposing that we render them energetic. It was one of the rules of ancient poetry, to aid whatever purity and immateriality the passions may have, and to reject what they may have of the gross and terrestrial. It was what the ancients called *purifying* the passions. We do the reverse. It seems that we have no faith in sentiments which do not cause a gesture, or a physical contortion. Convulsions of the body are necessary to make us believe in the emotions of the soul. It is not only in our theatres and in our literature that we have this mania ; we appreciate the passions in the world, according to the effect they produce on our health. Where they formerly endeavored to examine the heart, we are tempted to feel the pulse ; we doubt the sorrows which do not make us ill, we distrust the passions which do not drive us mad ; and in our pains we have recourse to the physician rather than the priest, because in spite of ourselves, and unconsciously, we believe only in the body.

We will give an example of the manner in which literature expresses this involuntary materialism, and how the painting of instinct becomes substituted by degrees in the place of the painting of the sentiments.

In the romance of Victor Hugo, entitled "*Notre Dame de Paris*," a poor recluse is represented as living in a hut which has only one small window. Her intellects have been partially deranged since she has lost her daughter, an infant of four years, whom the Gipsies have stolen from her. She recovers her daughter, who had narrowly escaped the scaffold, and was pursued by the sergeants-at-arms. She has concealed her in her hut, and refused to deliver her up to the executioner. The provost-marshal then orders them to pull down the hut, so that they may draw out Esmeralda from

this place of refuge where her mother thought that she was safe. It was a terrible moment; it was like that of Clytemnestra and Hecuba, when their daughters have been torn from their arms to be sacrificed on the altar.

“When the mother heard the pickaxes and levers undermining her strong-hold, she set up a horrible screaming; then she commenced to turn around in her hut with frightful quickness, like a wild beast in a cage. She said nothing more, but her eyes flashed fire. All at once she picked up a piece of pavement, laughed, and threw it with both hands at the workers; but as it was not well directed, it hit no one, and stopped at the feet of Tristan; she ground her teeth, and as the work of the demolishers seemed to advance, she retreated mechanically, and pressed her daughter more and more against the wall. All at once the recluse saw the wall shake, and heard the voice of Tristan who was encouraging the workers. Then she began to scream, and while she spoke, her voice rent the air like a saw, and stammered as if all her curses were pressed upon her lips to burst forth at once: ‘Ho! ho! ho! but it is too horrible. You are brigands! you are going to take away my daughter! I tell you that she is my daughter. Oh! the villains, the assassins! Help! help! fire!—they are robbing me of my child! Who then do they call the good God!’ Then addressing herself to Tristan with a haggard eye and foaming mouth, like a panther, and with her hair bristling up! . . .”

We stop here. In Ovid, the metamorphosis would have already commenced; for it is no longer human grief, but the rage of a panther from which the hunter tears its young; it is no longer a woman or a mother whom we see, but a furious wild beast. Anger is changed into madness, instinct has taken the place of sentiment, the soul has yielded to the body. We turn away, repeating the beautiful line of Terence:

Homo sum, atque humani nihil a me alienum puto.

IV.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS REPRESENTED THE STRUGGLE OF MAN AGAINST DANGER—THE SHIPWRECK OF ULYSSES IN HOMER—AND OF ROBINSON CRUSOE IN A ROMANCE OF THAT NAME—A DESCRIPTION OF A TEMPEST IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES—THE BURNING OF THE KENT, A SHIP BELONGING TO THE EAST INDIA COMPANY, IN 1825.

WHEN we become interested in the dying complaints of Iphigenia or Antigone, when we permit ourselves to be affected by the groans of the wounded Philoctetes, it is not because we are led to think of our own condition, and that we feel that we would pity ourselves if we were in their situation. The emotion which we experience proceeds from a more general sentiment; it has nothing personal. The man who has never felt the attacks of physical pain, sympathizes with the sufferings of Philoctetes; the man who curses life, is affected by the regrets which Antigone expresses at quitting it. Happy or unhappy, we are all moved by the plaints of tragic heroes, and that, without there being any necessity that ourselves should have experienced their misfortunes or their passions. What renders them pleasing and attractive is that man is the sport of them. Ajax is not of our country, age or family; and his misfortunes are very different from those which we have suffered, or which we shall perhaps ever suffer: it matters not; he moves us simply because he is a man, and because he suffers. We need not have any other connection or relationship with him than that.

Man is interested only in man. Nature itself pleases us only when it is animated by our emotions or by our reflections; left to itself, it languishes and loses all its charms. What we love in nature is the relation which we feel to exist between it and ourselves. The sea itself, beautiful and majestic as it is, requires the presence of man. The ocean

without vessels, attracts only half the interest, because it wants, if we may so speak, the moral movement which alone interests the soul. Compare for a moment the ocean when it is calm, and cradling on its surface the reflections of the sun, or violent and tempestuous, without a solitary vessel upon its bosom, without a man exposed to its deceitful placidity, or to its terrible fury ; compare it with the ocean when, contemplating it from the top of a mountain, we perceive at a distance a sail which cuts the side of the horizon, how all becomes animated at this sight. Now we see with an indifferent eye the breaking of the waves against each other ; our soul becomes absorbed in contemplating the immensity of the waters, and recovers itself a little in thinking of itself or of God. Now there is only one point upon which his eyes are fixed ; it is that where man is the sport of the waves. Contemplation is changed into sight, and emotion succeeds to reverie. So much interest does man add to every thing !

We will see how the ancients and the moderns have described the struggle of man with danger. We will take as an example the peril of the storm, that is to say, one of those perils in which he struggles with nature, because in struggles of this kind he exhibits a peculiar grandeur. It is true, they do not draw out all of his passions ; he has not the anger and the hatred with which his enemy usually inspires him ; but he has all his courage, enhanced frequently by the resignation which he derives from the involuntary respect which he feels for this nature, which, although violent and terrible, obeys nevertheless the laws which it has received from God ; or it may be from the secret superiority which the soul claims for itself over those elements which are stronger than man, which do not however know their strength, while man is conscious of his weakness. Man sometimes is courageous in opposing the storm with the trust which the Christian has in God, who is master of the storm as well as of life.

The most beautiful description of a storm of which we have any record, is to be found in the *Odyssey* of Homer.

Neptune, being angry with Ulysses, who has left the Island of Calypso, and is about to go to his dear Ithaca, raises a terrible storm against him. "The land and the sea are covered with dark clouds ; a gloomy night descends and is

spread over the waves. All the winds blow at the same time ; they raise the waves in a heap and roll them with fury against the shore. Ulysses then cried out : ‘ Wretched man that I am, what will become of me ! I fear that Calypso spoke the truth when she told me that, before I would reach the shores of Ithaca, my ruin would be accomplished. What lowering clouds ! How agitated and troubled the sea is becoming ! How the winds blow from all quarters of heaven ! He was still speaking when an immense wave broke into his vessel, and made it spin around like a whirlpool. Ulysses was compelled to let go the helm, which he was holding with both hands, and was swept out of his vessel. At the same time the violence of the storm broke his mast ; and the sails and cordage were blown into the sea. Ulysses remained for a long time under the water, struggling in vain to rise above the waves. The impetuosity of the waves, and his clothes, which became saturated with water, kept him under. At last he arose, and spouted from his mouth the briny waves which were streaming from his head ; then he looked around for the vessel, for he had not lost courage, although exhausted by fatigue ; and struggling with all his might, he succeeded in laying hold of it. He then sat down in the middle of his half-wrecked vessel, weak and exhausted, fortunate however in having escaped death.

“ The vessel floated here and there upon the sea, tossed about by the raging winds. The daughter of Cadmus, the beautiful Leucothœe, who was once a mortal, but afterwards became one of the nymphs of the sea, seeing Ulysses and his danger, was moved to pity. She took the form of a sea bird, and going out of the waves, she came and perched herself on the vessel of Ulysses. ‘ Unfortunate one,’ says she, ‘ what have you done to the powerful Neptune, that he should seek thus to destroy you ! Nevertheless you shall not perish, although he desires it much. I see that you have preserved your prudence and your courage. Do, then, what I tell you : take off your clothes and abandon your vessel to the winds ; cast yourself into the sea, and swim to the shores of the Thracians : it is there that destiny wills that you should be saved. Take this girdle which is immortal, and which will preserve you from death ; place it around your breast, and do not fear that you will perish. When you have reached the shore, you will throw it back into the sea, turning your

head away, and without looking behind.' When she had thus spoken, the goddess gave him the girdle; then still retaining the form of a bird, she plunged again into the sea, and the waves concealed her. The patient Ulysses commenced to deliberate with himself: 'Perhaps this is some god who wishes to destroy me, by ordering me to quit my vessel. I will not do it; for the land, where she tells me I will be saved, if I reach it, is still a long way off. I prefer as long as the planks of my vessel can resist the fury of the waves, to remain and bear the storm. When the waves will have wrecked it, I will then swim to the land. This is the best course that I can take.'

"While these reflections were passing through his mind, Neptune raised an immense wave of formidable height, which, breaking over the vessel of Ulysses, as a blast of wind scatters a bundle of straw here and there upon the waves, wrecked the vessel into a thousand pieces. Ulysses leaped quickly upon a beam, and straddling it crosswise, as if on horseback, he pulled off his clothes, the cherished gift of Calypso: he then threw over his breast the girdle of Leucothœe, and stretching out his arms, he leapt into the sea, and commenced to swim towards the land. Neptune saw him, and shaking his head, 'Go now,' says he, 'wander upon the waves until you can reach the land where men, the children of Jupiter, inhabit.' And after saying these words, he disappeared and went into the temple of Ægeum. Minerva then endeavoring to save Ulysses, whom she protected, restrained the blowing of the winds, except that of Boreas, so that driving the waves upon the shore of the Thracians, it would assist him in escaping death.

"During two entire days and nights, Ulysses wandered about on the waves. Often his heart became discouraged, and anticipated death; but on the third day, the dawn appeared with a clear and serene sky. The wind was lulled and a calm was spread over the waters. He then saw the land; it was near; and he raised himself on the waves to observe it. Not when sweet life returns to a father who has for a long time been suffering from illness; when his sons see him cheered up after a long dejection, delivered at last by the gods, was more dear to the eyes of his sons, than was the sight of the land and the sweet verdure to the eyes of Ulysses. He swam, striving with his hands and feet to

reach this beloved land. But when he was not further than the reach of the human voice, he heard the noise of the sea breaking over the rocks on the shore. The waves roared in striking against the land, for there was no harbor, nor easy access to the shore. Ulysses began again to be afflicted: 'Alas!' exclaimed he, 'after having seen the land which I feared I would never more see, after having crossed over the sea, can I find no way of getting out of the waves? All these rocks are steep, and the water which breaks over the banks raises an inaccessible wall. The sea is so deep that I cannot touch bottom with my feet any where. If the waves throw me against a rock, I cannot hold on to it; and if I swim further, who knows if I will find some harbor, or favorable creek? And then the storm may carry me off again to sea, or perhaps some hostile deity may send some monster like Amphitrite to devour me; for I know how terrible is the anger of Neptune against me.'

"Thus thought Ulysses. But suddenly the waves pitched him on the shore. His body would have been broken and his flesh mangled, if Minerva had not inspired him to seize with both hands a rock, to which he clung groaning until it passed by. The wave passed, and he escaped the rock which he feared; but in returning, it carried him off, and threw him back into the sea; and as the polypus, drawn from the bottom of the sea, preserves in its broken filaments particles of sand and pebbles, so the skin of the hero stuck to the points of the rock which he had embraced. Carried off again into the sea, he was this time about to perish. Minerva advised him to swim a little further on, and he would arrive at the mouth of a river where the waters were calm and beautiful. There the shore had no rocks, and was sheltered from the winds. 'Hear me, whoever you are, beneficent River,' cried Ulysses; 'I come to you as a suppliant, who has narrowly escaped the anger of Neptune. The immortal gods themselves respect whoever, among men, comes wandering and weak as I am in approaching your waters, in embracing your knees after having suffered so much. Have pity upon me, O River! I am your guest and your suppliant!'

"Thus prayed Ulysses; and the river, moved with pity, calmed its waters, and received him into her bosom. His knees were bent with fatigue, his arms fell exhausted by the

side of his body, so much had he suffered from the sea. His limbs were swollen with pain, the briny waters streamed from his mouth and nostrils; he could not breathe or speak. However, by degrees he recovered his breath, his spirits revived, and then his first care was to remove from his breast the immortal girdle of Leucothœ, and to throw it back into the waves, without looking behind him. The waves carried it off, and the goddess received it in her hands; then Ulysses, going out of the river, sat himself down on the sedge on the shore, and kissed the land which preserves and nourishes men."

We have not interrupted this admirable narrative by any reflections; but it is well to remark the singular art with which Homer has varied the incidents of his storm, and with what tact he managed to keep up the interest. There is only one individual, viz. Ulysses, who is always in danger; and yet his description is never monotonous, because it is, if we may so speak, divided into different pictures, which constantly excite the attention of the spectator. Thus, Ulysses is precipitated into the waves; but recovers himself by seizing his disabled ship; and it is there that Homer represents him weak, exhausted, wandering at the mercy of the winds and waves, but sustained by his courage, and fortunate in having escaped a horrible death; for Homer well knew that the sea and its waves, sometimes white and sometimes black, interest us no less than the sentiments of his hero. Other painters of tempests are absorbed in the description of the material accidents of the storm. Homer always exhibits man and human sentiments. When he introduces a goddess of the sea, the beautiful Leucothœ, who comes to assist Ulysses, he does not forget to tell us that she was once a mortal; and for this reason she takes pity on Ulysses, and wishes to save him. Her pity proceeds from the sympathy which she feels for the sufferings of the whole human family. If Leucothœ, in the tempest of Homer, has a superior part to that of Neptune, the persecutor of the hero, or of Minerva herself, who protects Ulysses, she owes it to her condition, half mortal and half goddess. She can do something for the safety of Ulysses, but she cannot do every thing. It is owing to this fact that she interests us, and it is for this cause that she does not destroy the interest which is attached to the hero. Virgil, in giving to the gods and goddesses the first characters in his

tempest, perhaps believed that he would make the tempest more marvellous* and poetical, but he had made it less interesting. We admire the courage and industry of Ulysses, overcoming the violence of the storm, more than Neptune chiding Æolus, calming the agitated waves, and with a stroke of his trident drawing out vessels obstructed by the rocks, for it is easier to invent prodigies than to excite emotions. But this constitutes the merit of the tempest of Homer. It is not descriptive, like that of Ovid, nor mythological, like that of Virgil; it is full of man and his emotions, instead of being full of nature and its accidents, or of the gods and their miracles. The perils of Ulysses create all his interest, and nowhere in antiquity is the struggle of man against danger represented with more fidelity.

In this struggle, such as Homer has represented it, man suffers much, but does not permit himself to be dejected; he resists, sustained by the love of life, and finally overcomes nature itself, by the force of industry and patience. It is a particular kind of courage, and the grandeur of which appears only in the denouement of the struggle, and by obtaining the victory; for, during the struggle, the hero does not hesitate to complain and lament. If we judge by his words, he seems weak and discouraged; but if we consider his actions, he is firm and indomitable. Some elevate themselves above danger by the power of resignation, and they seem to despise danger rather than to overcome it. But the patience of Ulysses by no means resembles Christian resignation: it is the triumph of industrious and intelligent firmness, which never desponds nor becomes weary, rather than the calmness which a confidence in God inspires.

- * *Interea magno misceri murmure pontum
Emissam qui hiemem sensit Neptunas, et imis
Stagna refusa vadis: graviter commotus, et alto
Prospiciens, summa placidum caput extulit unda
Disiectam Ænea toto videt æquore classem,
Fluctibus oppressos Troas cœli que ruina;
Nec latuere doli fratrem Junonis et iræ.
. . . . dicto citius tumida æquora placat
Collectas qui fugat nubes solem que reducit
Cimothee simul et Triton adnixus acuto
Detrudunt naves Scopulo; levat ipse tridenti
Et vastas aperit syrtes et temporat æquor.*

ÆNEID.

A celebrated English romancer, Daniel De Foe, seems to have been inspired by Homer in the description of the storm which casts Robinson Crusoe on the desert island. There are, between the shipwreck of Ulysses and that of Robinson, points of resemblance which chance alone could not explain. The vessel of Robinson, we are aware, no more resembles the vessel of Ulysses than the marine of our time resembles that of the earliest days of navigation, and our mariners would perhaps laugh at the storms which made Ulysses tremble ; but, sooner or later, there comes a time when all tempests resemble each other ; when man, whether he be upon a bark decked like the vessels of the Greeks in the days of Ulysses, or upon a three-decked vessel, sees the sea face to face, and has no other resource but his courage to save himself. It is at this critical moment that there is a striking resemblance between the shipwreck of Ulysses and that of Robinson Crusoe ; the details are the same, and so are the emotions.

Like Ulysses, Robinson is cast violently against the shore by the sea, and in order to prevent the wave from carrying him off, he clings like Ulysses to a rock, letting the waves pass over his head until he has a little recovered his breath. De Foe has not forgotten to describe the inexpressible joy which Robinson experiences when, seated on the grass on the shore, he sees himself safe from the fury of the waves ; and this joy recalls to our memory the joy of Ulysses seeing at a distance the land and its sweet verdure. But here we must remark a difference between the genius of the ancients and that of the moderns. The principal object of the ancients was to *describe*, the moderns endeavor to *explain* ; the ancients addressed themselves to the imagination, the moderns to the reason. Thus, when Homer wishes to give an idea of the joy of Ulysses in seeing the land, he does not undertake to explain the different sentiments which agitate his heart ; he selects from the sweetest affections of humanity that which is most sacred, filial affection ; and this same affection he seizes in a moment of the purest and liveliest joy, in the joy which the convalescence of a father causes to his devoted children. He takes care to explain this ineffable joy ; and yet it is by the aid of this joy which he does not explain, that he gives us the idea of the joy of Ulysses. The comparison strengthens the idea rather than defines it. De Foe, on the contrary, endeavors to define the joy of Robinson by comparing it to

that of a man who has been condemned to die, but who has received his pardon, and whom the surgeon is compelled to bleed, to prevent the dangers of the shock which the joy of his deliverance would produce. The comparison of the ancient poet awakens in the mind the divine idea of joy ; that of the modern romancer, represents material sensation.

De Foe is again inspired by Homer in describing his Robinson after the first emotion of joy which he experiences after his deliverance. The march of ideas and sentiments is the same : In Homer, "Ulysses, after having kissed the ground which saved him, thinks of his destitution and his misery. What is to become of him ? Where shall he lie down ?—On the side of the river ? But the vapor which arises only from the waters will chill his body ; and exhausted as he is, he will die from weakness and cold. Shall he go to find shelter in the neighboring forest ? But he fears he may become a prey to wild beasts. He determines however to take refuge in the forest. He finds two olive trees, one wild and the other grafted on the same stock ; and which, intertwining their branches, could shelter him from the wind and rain, and even from the rays of the sun. It is there that he reposes, and Minerva sends him sweet sleep to refresh him after his fatigues." In De Foe, Robinson, after the first emotion of joy, turns his eyes around him, and is frightened at his desolate condition. Like Ulysses, he fears to become the prey of wild beasts ; and like Ulysses, he reposes under a tree, where he sleeps a sleep as pleasant as that which Minerva sends to Ulysses.

The struggle which Ulysses sustains with nature, constitutes the interest of the tempest in the *Odyssey*. The interest of the tempest in *Robinson Crusoe*, as well as his whole history, proceed from the same source. We love to see Robinson, left to his own strength, struggling against the dangers which surround him, and recover by degrees, through patience and industry, all the arts of human life. Robinson in his isle is alone and always on the stage, and yet he is never monotonous. Each effort which he makes, interests us ; for each one of his efforts represents, if we may so speak, one of the phases of human society, which has suffered and worked to invent the arts ; and the history of human inventions, collected in the history of a single individual, pleases us so much the more, since in the history of Robinson we see better than in

general history, the emotions and ideas which each invention must excite. It is these emotions which give an infinite charm to the experiments of Robinson. He makes himself a potter, joiner, laborer, bricklayer, architect, and what not; but the man is always appearing; the invention occupies us less than the inventor. It is the inventor whom we observe with indefatigable curiosity. We follow the struggle which Robinson sustains against the wants of humanity; we enjoy his successes, we applaud his triumphs, and enter into all his feelings; we take part in his disquietudes, in his hopes, in his disappointments; happy when he is delighted, and discouraged when he falls into despondency; but like Ulysses, he is also sustained by the love of life. He has besides a feeling which sustains him effectually against despair, viz. the religious sentiment. In solitude he recovers his religion as he recovers the arts, so that his history may represent precisely the history of humanity. Robinson could, if he were compelled, live without the religious sentiment, for the material man can do without God; but the mind and the heart cannot do without God, and De Foe has wished to represent man an entire. Thus we see in Robinson, after the first moments given to satisfy the wants of the body, his mind wakes up and becomes uneasy; and then he thinks of the Bible, the only book which he has saved from the shipwreck. For we may remark that De Foe wished that Robinson should be assisted in all his inventions by some outward help. He has to make his movables in the image of the movables which he has seen, and the tools which he took with him from the vessel; to return to God, he has also the Bible. He recovers rather than invents, and it is in that perhaps that he best resembles humanity. As soon as Robinson has found his God, he is no longer alone on his island; his Bible, once forgotten and mute, now spoke to him a language which fills and enlivens his solitude. From this moment the man has become, in Robinson, all that he could become when he is alone. There is wanting to him of the ideas and emotions natural to man, only those which society gives, and these will come to him as soon as he will have Friday for his servant and companion.

The romance of Robinson delineates in an admirable manner the interest which man takes in describing the emotions of man, and proves that we do not require a great tu-

mult of events to affect us. The adventures of Robinson, before and after his abode on the island, are a thousand times more varied than those of his solitude, and yet these adventures affect us but little. It is not then in the diversity of events that we must expect to find interest, nor is it in the description of material nature. De Foe had a fine opportunity to describe the island of Robinson, and to paint its solitude and its melancholy beauty. A descriptive and elegiac poet would have made Robinson a visionary or a misanthrope. De Foe has made him a man: it is this which has made his romance immortal.

We have drawn a parallel between the *Odyssey* of Homer and the romance of De Foe, because these two narratives, although different in time, manner, and merit, have, notwithstanding, the same kind of interest. They affect us by representing the struggle which man sustains against nature. But there is also, in the struggles which man sustains with nature, another kind of courage, less stirring and less dramatic, which does not combat danger, but which disdains it: it is the courage of the Christian who, prepared to die, awaits with calmness whatever it may please God to send him. When art paints this kind of courage, it gains in dignity what it loses in action, and man becomes by resignation as great as he was by struggle. We may add, that, in Christianity, this resignation never degenerates into a proud insensibility. Faith gives to the heart of man a strength which, coming from God, elevates him without puffing him up, and makes him firm and steadfast without ceasing to humble him.

The narrative of the storm in *The Acts of the Apostles*, affords the best example of the interest which this kind of courage excites. St. Paul was sent prisoner to Rome. For several days the vessel kept its regular course; but suddenly a storm arose, mingled with whirlwinds:

"But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. . . . But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I

am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar : and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer ; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat ; for this is for your health : for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus said, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all ; and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat."

We observe that in this tempest, as in that of Ulysses, man is always in the scene. But between Ulysses and St. Paul what a difference ! The one never despairs, although he is never inspired, but is sustained in his struggle with danger by the love of life, a feeling which gives more patience than dignity ; the other, who is in a vessel beaten by the waves, is occupied with the storm only for the purpose of consoling his friends, and who tells them, with a confident tone, that they will never lose a hair of their head : the angel of the Lord has told him so, and his God is no deceiver. Ulysses hesitates when Leucothœe advises him to quit his vessel, and to cast himself into the waves : perhaps it is a trick of some hostile deity ! But the God whom St. Paul serves is not a God of tricks, and his words do not inspire hesitation ; they strengthen the heart of man ; they enable him to forget the ragings of the storm. St. Paul is no longer a shipwrecked mariner who courageously struggles with death ; he is an inspired prophet and apostle. The tempest almost ceases to become dangerous ; it only affords an opportunity for the grandeur of God to manifest itself—of the God whom he serves, *and whose he is* ; for it is to God, and not to the angry waves which are ready to engulf him—not to this battered vessel which is about to sink, that he trusts ; it is in God, who has saved him and his companions from a watery grave ; and in pledge of the life which he promises them, he distributes in the midst of the storm the bread of Christian communion.

An admirable lesson, which should teach to man all the nobility of his nature ! In the midst of the most terrible catastrophes,—in the midst of fire and tempest,—if we take

any one of the sentiments of the human heart, be it courage which proceeds from the love of life, or trust in God, or honor, or respect of the law, and compare it with the material effects of the catastrophes which you relate, these effects, however terrible and extraordinary they may be, no longer attract our attention ; the human sentiment which is the subject of them, instantly eclipses them, and material nature loses its grandeur as soon as moral nature appears.

We will relate a story which beautifully illustrates what we have just said. In 1825, a terrible fire broke out at sea on board of the *Kent*, a ship belonging to the East India Company. The Captain, seeing that there was no hope of being able to extinguish the fire, which had almost reached a powder deposit, gave orders to let the water on the first and second decks. The water entered into all parts of the ship, and was about to arrest the fury of the flames ; but this caused a still greater danger, and the vessel seemed about to sink into the sea. Then commenced a scene of horror which beggars all description. The deck was covered with six or seven hundred human creatures, many of whom had been confined to their beds by sea-sickness, who were compelled to fly without their clothes, and ran here and there seeking their fathers, husbands, or children. While some awaited their death with silent resignation or stupid insensibility, others abandoned themselves to all the wildness of despair. * * The wives and children of the soldiers had come to seek refuge in the chambers of the upper decks, and there they prayed and read the Bible with the wives of the officers and passengers. Among them were two sisters, who, with admirable presence of mind, selected at this moment from the Psalms that one which best suited their danger, and commenced to read with a loud voice, alternately, the following verses :

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The Lord of Hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our high reward."

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters ; yes, there is at this moment upon the waters only the voice of the Lord, and that of man which faith unites to God. This voice of

God controls for us the whistling of the winds, the roaring of the storm, and the cries of despairing passengers, if indeed there were any who could despair after witnessing the piety of these two young sisters. It controls in our mind the idea of the tempest, as it controlled the tempest itself in the souls which this song reanimated ; which will never be sung by purer voices until it be chanted by the angels of Heaven !

“ In this extreme danger, the Captain ordered a man to climb to the mast-head, to see if he could discover any vessel upon the surface of the ocean, which could come to his assistance. The sailor having arrived at his post looked all around the horizon ; it was for us a moment of unspeakable anguish ; then suddenly flourishing his hat, he exclaimed, — ‘ A sail under the wind.’ This happy news was received with a feeling of profound gratitude, and we responded to it with three cheers of joy. The vessel designated was an English brig, which was coming under full sail to the assistance of the Kent. Then commenced a new scene. The transportation from one vessel to the other was difficult, on account of the violence of the sea ; it must take a long time, and yet at any moment the vessel might sink. Discipline was observed, and the sentiment of honor was not less powerful in overcoming their impatience for deliverance, than was the sentiment of faith and prayer against the despair of death. ‘ In what order must the officers go from the vessel ? ’ inquired one of the lieutenants. ‘ In the order which is observed at funerals,’ answered the Captain. And in this order, which seemed a symbol of peril, the passengers and crew left the vessel, the youngest passing first, and the officers of the highest grade remaining the last upon the vessel.”

Here we may remark in conclusion, that the tempest and fire move us less than the fortitude of man ; here man is more noble, according to the thought of Pascal,* than the elements which seem about to overwhelm him.

* Quand l'univers ecrasserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt ; et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien.—*Pensées de Pascal.*

V.

SUICIDE AND THE HATRED OF LIFE—DIDO IN VIRGIL—CEDIPUS IN SENECA AND IN SOPHOCLES—STAGYRA IN SAINT CHRYSOSTOM.

It may be safely asserted, that in order to arrive at the idea of suicide, a certain exercise of the understanding, and a certain fermentation of the passions, are necessary. Men who have not studied, women who have not read romances, do not, in their troubles, have recourse to suicide. Hence we hear of more suicides among civilized people than among barbarous people ; and it has been remarked, that in the East suicides have occurred only since the influence which European ideas have introduced. The most wretched and destitute man in the world, the man who has been reduced to the miseries of Job, if he had not tasted a little of the Tree of Knowledge, if he has not added to his sufferings the torment of thoughts, would never think of taking his life by his own hand. Suicide is not the disease of simple-minded people ; it is a disease created by refinement and philosophy ; and if artisans, in these days, are addicted to suicide, it is caused by their minds being continually soured and corrupted by modern science and civilization.

In antiquity, all the sects of philosophers, especially at Rome, had a mania for suicide. The Stoics killed themselves in order to become free and independent ; the Epicureans killed themselves because they found that in this world there was much suffering, and but little pleasure. The Stoics died with an air of grandeur and fortitude which appeared theatrical ; the Epicureans placed in theirs a carelessness and an indifference which they considered in good taste. " Why," said they, " make so much ceremony about so small an affair ? Where is the necessity, O Cato ! of appointing a philosophic conference for the purpose of solemnly discussing

the right to kill yourself, to read Phedon again, to prepare your sword majestically, and to make your house and your family unhappy and gloomy by these funereal preparations? Quit life quietly on retiring from table; go to die instead of going to sleep, for that resembles it much; and do not have the air of believing that you are doing something great and difficult." The Epicureans, in their turn, belied their indifference about death by exaggerating it: they killed themselves in company, among their friends, amid the festivities and the joys of life; another kind of pomp which, in order to counteract the gloomy ideas which death naturally inspires, afforded no less manifest evidence that for none is death an agreeable or simple thing. There was, at Alexandria, under Anthony and Cleopatra, an academy of *συναποθούμενων*, a society of men who agreed to die together, who made a profession of exhausting all the pleasures of life until the day on which they appointed to die. Cleopatra, who was a member of this academy, made researches for the purpose of ascertaining what kinds of poison enabled men to die with least pain; each one, even in dying, striving, according to the rules of his sect, to seek pleasure and to avoid pain.

What renders it evident that suicide is not an idea which man derives from nature, but from reflection, is, that fashion often regulates the form and manner of the suicide, and that, in ancient times, they died as Stoics or Epicureans, according as the one or the other sect happened to be dominant. So in our days, suicides are imitated after the modern dramas; they are all enthusiastic, melancholy, full of disgust for society, such, in a word, as modern society has made them: for the Theatre does not borrow its ideas and its passions from society, but society imitates the Theatre.

Besides those suicides which are caused by a mixture of philosophy and passion, which come from the sects of antiquity or from the influence of modern literature, which is the common kind of suicide in our days, there is another species of suicide, which is less subtle, and springs from the violent passions, and which has nothing to do with philosophy. It is particularly this last-named suicide of which the ancients have treated. Phædra, Ajax, and Dido, do not reason upon the right which they believed they had over their own lives: they yielded to the counsels of despair, without arguing, without subtilizing, and without indulging in the profound reveries

of Hamlet ; without experiencing the ennui of Werter, and without cursing society, like Chatterton. Their death is an act of despair, and not the conclusion of a philosophical or religious dissertation. They were not able to support their pain, and, in a moment of impatience, they have cast away their lives :

Lucem que perosi,
Projicere animas.

Æneid, vi. 435.

But we see how soon death caused them to regret their hatred of life ! How they wished to see again the sweet light of day, had they even to support those pains which they once believed insupportable :

Quam vellent æthere in alto
Nunc et pauperiem et duros perferre labores !
Fata obstant, tristi que palus inamabilis unda
Alligat et novies Styx interfosa coerces.

Æneid, vi. 436.

Therefore it was their fate to suffer the punishment which they untimely hastened ; for, instead of approving suicide, Virgil condemned it. The man who killed another, or who killed himself, was a furious madman, who was led astray by a violent passion ; he was not a model whom the ancient Theatre proposed for our imitation. Ancient poetry attracted pity towards the suicide or the murderer, but it did not justify the murder ; it did not conclude from the fact to the right ; it did not elevate the passion into a doctrine ; it endeavored to move, but not with a view to convince ; it did not give an argument any more for killing one's self than one's neighbor ; it makes us pity Dido because she could not support the departure of Æneas, or Orestes, who avenged upon his mother the murder of his father. In this consists the difference between the heroes of the ancient and the heroes of the modern drama. The ancient heroes affect those who come to see them die ; the modern heroes instruct and indoctrinate them. We will examine more particularly this difference between the characters which have been celebrated in ancient poetry.

Take, for example, Dido, who has been betrayed by Æneas. St. Augustine reproached himself for not being able to read the fourth book of the *Æneid*, without shedding tears.

In fact, the painting of the love of Dido excited a pity which seemed dangerous to St. Augustine. But in this pity, there was nothing which justified suicide. Dido does not think that she has the right to kill herself; she kills herself because she is overcome by grief.

Ergo ubi concepit furias evicta dolore

Decrerit que mori

Æneid, ix. 474.

She no longer thinks of justifying her passion; she knows what is her delirium, and only demands of Æneas a little respite.

Tempus inane peto, requiem spatium que furori.

Æneid, iv. 433.

And what causes us to weep over Dido is, that in these discourses and melancholy preparations for death, all breathes of passion, and nothing indicates a spirit of system or philosophic ostentation. On this night, full of repose for all nature, and of agitation for Dido alone, she does not rack her brains to find out if she had a right to dispose of her own life, and to know what was to come after death; love alone torments her; and when she feels that she has nothing more to expect from Æneas,—“Let me die,” says she, “as I have well deserved it.”

A Roman would have said, “I will die, since I have a right to die.” In fine, when Dido is upon the funeral pile which has been prepared for her, she does not employ her last moments in glorifying her conduct, and repeating those beautiful speeches so dear to the dying Stoics. No: she takes the sword of Æneas and draws it from the scabbard, without saying, like Cato, taking his sword: “Now I am my own master.” Sweeter and more tender thoughts occupy her mind. She thinks of him whom she believed to be her husband, and who ought with his sword to defend her against her enemies; she casts a look upon those garments which Æneas wore, upon all that which she had belonging to him, and which she desired to be burnt with her: “Mournful relics,” says she, “pledges of love, while the gods have permitted it, receive my soul, and deliver me from my anguish.” Having kissed her bed for the last time, she exclaimed: “What! to die, and without avenging myself! Yes, I will die; and may the flame of my funeral pile shine over the sea

in the eyes of the Trojan ! May my death serve as an omen to his flight ! ” *

The death of Dido is full of passion, and hence she is so dramatic. But very soon, at Rome, suicide assumed a more philosophic and sententious tone. Instead of a scene of passion, it became a theme for philosophic discussion. In the *Thebaid* of Seneca, *Œdipus* and *Antigone* enter into a debate on the subject of suicide. *Œdipus* wishes to kill himself, not only because he is unfortunate, but because he has the right to do so. “ I have,” said he to *Antigone*, “ the right over my own life and death. I have abdicated without pain the empire of Thebes, but I reserve the control over my life. Give me my sword, my daughter ; I have resolved to die, and to conceal myself in the darkness of Hades, for although blind, the night where I am does not sufficiently conceal me ; it is in Hades itself that I wish to be buried. No one has the right to prevent my death. Do you wish to refuse me my sword ? to take away from me the herbs which administer death ? Your efforts will be in vain, death is every where. God in his wisdom has so ordered it. Any body may deprive man of life, but no one can save him from death.”

Antigone in her reply is no less sententious : “ My father,” says she, “ it behooves a courageous man like you, not to give way to grief, and not to fly from the evils of life. Virtue does not fear to live ; it resists misfortune and looks it in the face ; and there is no more true contempt of death than not even to desire it. The man who has reached the lowest stage of misery is henceforth in safety ; the gods themselves can add nothing to his misfortunes.”

Such are *Œdipus* and *Antigone* as Roman Stoicism has represented them. We are no more with *Sophocles* at *Colonna*, in the wood sacred to the *Furies*, mysterious and terrible divinities, whom *Œdipus* invokes as the supreme arbiters of his fate, for he knows that his fate is in the hands of the gods, and that he cannot dispose of his life : “ May the day come,” says he, “ which destiny has fixed for the end

* *Dulces exuvias, dum fata deus que sinebant !
Accipite hanc animam, me que his exsolvite curis.*

*Dixit, et os impressa toro : Moriemur inultæ !
Sed moriamur, ait : sic, sic, juvat ire sub umbras.
Hauriat hunc oculis ignem crudelis ab alto
Dardanus et nostræ secum ferat omnia mortis.*

of my misfortunes! May Appollo and the daughters of night hasten the hour of my deliverance." Sophocles well knew that of all the personages of mythological antiquity, Œdipus was the least intended to be a philosopher and a reasoner. Stamped from his birth with the seal of fatality, Œdipus had long since renounced the hope of understanding the secret of his destiny; he regards himself as the victim or the instrument of the gods, and he would believe himself to be impious if he dared to take his life into his own hands.

In Greek tragedy, suicide is never treated as a question of philosophy or natural right: it is always the effect of a violent passion. Even the suicide of Ajax, which is the most premeditated in the Greek drama, has nothing sententious and declamatory. In a fit of madness, Ajax has destroyed a flock of sheep, supposing that he was attacking Ulysses and the Atrides his enemies. He soon after discovered his mistake, and, ashamed of his folly, he did not wish to be seen by the Greeks, and resolved to die. This resolution of the hero is calm and melancholy; but Sophocles has avoided with much care to fall into a philosophic gravity, which excludes dramatic emotion, as in the disorder of madness; for he has wished to represent an unfortunate man who has resolved to die, and not a philosopher who wishes to make a glorious death, or an ill man who kills himself in a fit of raging fever. Ajax, always mournful and sad, would not affect us: he regrets life, yet resolves to die. His soul is agitated by a thousand different passions, by his hatred of Ulysses and the sons of Atreus, by his love for his son Eurysaces, whom he recommends to his brother Teucer; and it is for these reasons that he moves us. We particularly admire the entreaties of Techmessa, the wife of Ajax, when we compare them with the sententious consolations of the Antigone of Seneca: "Ajax," says Techmessa, "from the time that I became the partner of your bed, I have thought only of you. I conjure you in the name of Jupiter, the protector of domestic hearths, by this couch upon which we have reposed together, not to permit me to pass into other hands. Take pity on your son, who, if deprived of you and of the cares which infancy requires, will live under rude tutelage. What evils will not your death bring upon us! After you I will have no other assistance." A touching prayer, and full of the only consolation which could subdue the heart of

Ajax. Nothing consoles the unfortunate so much as to feel themselves useful to those who are more unhappy than themselves; and the sympathy which we have in the sorrows of another prevents us from despairing of our own.

Stoicism is not dramatic. Wishing to render the soul firm, it makes it immovable; and its heroes, who are not affected themselves, cannot affect the spectator. In the world, as in history, stoicism seen at a distance, produces effect. Man loves to witness this severe doctrine, which seems to place him above all painful sensations, and which strengthens at the same time that it elevates him; he is pleased in contemplating this thick buckler, which none of the darts of misfortune can penetrate. Timid and weak characters are especially fond of seeing those men who are inaccessible to fear and pain; each one imagines himself covered with this philosophic armor, and for a moment indulges the belief that it is easy to panoply himself in proof. Thus we see that stoicism was particularly successful in those times when civilization refined and rendered the character effeminate; since at that time society felt itself corrupted and enervated by a softness which it desired to shake off. Stoicism was pleasing as a contrast, as a consolation, as a hope; it was pleasing to a great number until it was put to the proof; a small number alone pushed it beyond that. But these few select ones found only fortitude enough to die well; they did not manifest the desire and the strength to alleviate the evils of humanity. Stoicism gives him resignation rather than devotedness; he is always ready to die, less with a view to assist or to save others, than to honor himself by the sacrifice of his life. Cato killed himself to avoid becoming a slave; Brutus, because he despaired of virtue: both of them sacrificed themselves for honor rather than for their liberty. This is the evil or the weakness of the Stoic philosophy. It elevates man, but it seems that in elevating above the world, it separates him from it, and renders him useless to his fellow-men. This heritage of barren heroism, this tradition of suicide from respect to one's self and his dignity, was perpetuated at Rome from the illustrious men of one generation to those of another. The Stoics of the Empire did not enter into many conspiracies; they did not endeavor to free the world of its tyrants; they were contented to take care of their honor by

observing silence in the Senate, when it basely condemned Agrippina who was assassinated by Nero, and by a tranquil suicide when the Emperor demanded their death.*

Useless and powerless in the world, *stoicism* is scarcely more effective on the stage. It endeavors to perfect us by taking away our sensibility to pleasure and pain; but these sympathies are the bonds which unite us to nature and humanity. By virtue of their insensibility to pleasure and pain, the Stoic becomes a fine brazen statue. How do you wish us to be interested in this cold and inanimate marble? We place our hand upon his bosom, we feel no pulsation; we take his hand, and feel no corresponding sympathy. Hence we see that, notwithstanding the beautiful verses of Addison, the death of Cato on the stage never affects any one.

Heretofore we have only examined the suicide which springs from passion or reflection, such as the history of the antique stage and philosophy have represented it. There is another kind of suicide, more esteemed in our days, which is caused rather by weakness and impatience of the soul, than by the violence of the passions or the vagary of systems. To see this kind of suicide, which seems the particular evil of our age, we might be tempted at times to believe that man has never before felt an attack of this malady. But it is not so. There has existed a literature which expressed the state of uneasiness and disquietude which we feel, and which has represented the world consuming itself in melancholy sadness in the midst of the most giddy pleasures, and finding in suicide an end, rather than a remedy for its evils. This literature is peculiar to the Fathers of the Church.

We will take, for the subject of our remarks upon this new species of suicide, a personage named Stagyra, who was possessed of a devil, whom we find in the Homilies of St. Chrysostom.

This malady was a kind of melancholy dejection of the soul, which the Greeks expressed by the word *ασυμια*. Stagyra was one of those diseased and restless souls who imagine that they belong to the élite, because they have not the strength of vulgar souls; who have their joys and sorrows apart from the rest of the world, and who, as a last trait of weakness and impatience, despise and at the same time envy the calmness

* Tacitus, Anal. Book 14.

and simplicity of those who are called ordinary people. Stagyra, in order to rid his soul of its disquietudes, had entered into a monastery. But even there he did not find that peace and gayety of heart which he sought for every where ; for man, in the first days of his solitude, finds only that which he brings. Stagyra was dissatisfied ; and his complaint is curious, because it indicates at the same time one of the remedies of the evil which torments him, and shows that Stagyra, like many other ill people, could not support either the evil or the remedy. "What causes you pain, Stagyra," says St. Chrysostom, "is to see that many men who were tormented by the demon of melancholy, when they lived amidst the delights and pleasures of the world, find themselves entirely cured as soon as they have married, and have had children ; while neither your fastings, your watchings, nor all the austerities of the monastery can alleviate your pain." This sentence is full of useful instruction. It was not from want of pleasures and delights that men became a prey to melancholy. This morbid disquietude entered, like the undying worm, into all the joys and pleasures of the Roman world. Nor had they any relief against the demon of Stagyra either in their beautiful slaves, or in their Ionian dances, or in their magnificent entertainments, or in their gladiatorial combats, or in the licentious stories of Milet, or in the voluptuous paintings of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Athumia poisoned all that, and the demon possessed all these debauchees in the very midst of their excesses. But if, wearied with these pleasures and these pains, they acquired regular and simple manners ; if they married and had children, then, as if by enchantment, the demon would disappear. The sweetness of domestic life caused these disquietudes and miseries to leave them. They had no longer any low-spiritedness or bitterness of feeling. The souls of those who were possessed became reanimated, refreshed, and revived by the caresses of their children. There was no longer any demon, not even that of sadness, which dared to haunt the vicinity of little children. There was in the innocent and fresh breath of these little creatures something that was deadly to the evil spirit ; and the cradle of an infant suckled by its mother was the surest talisman against thoughts which came from hell.

It is necessary, then, that the soul should have hope ; that it should have a future, in order to escape from that dejection

of which we have been speaking. Hope—that is to say, faith in the future—is the nourishment of the soul. Man, in order to live, has need of the future; otherwise he would despair and die. The value of children, and what causes them to be reckoned among the blessings of God, is that they are the future of every family, and keep alive that idea which nourishes the soul. Children represent to us the future, and that under the most smiling and gracious aspect. In this consists their irresistible charm; and it is that which throws around their little heads a halo of happiness and joy which is reflected upon the countenances of parents, which cheers their hearts, and gives to the poorest and most wretched the strength to live and labor. Blessed then be infancy, which removes sadness and chases away the demon! Blessed be that by which the idea and the sentiment of the future are kept alive in the bosom of families, as indispensable to man as the light and the air which he breathes.

In the three books addressed to Stagyra, St. Chrysostom examines what is the species of melancholy which possesses him; and these reflections are especially applicable to our own times, for the melancholy of Stagyra is only the effect of the disorder and effeminacy of the soul; a capacious sorrow, which it is often more difficult to cure than a real malady, because there is no error that can withstand the truth.

St. Chrysostom does not neglect to compare the imaginary sufferings of Stagyra with the real sufferings of the poor and diseased. "Go," says he, "to the prison, or to the entrance of the public baths: see those wretches who have neither house nor home, chilled with cold, shivering from hunger and misery, with pale and faded cheeks, their teeth chattering, and even having scarcely strength enough to speak, or to stretch out their hands; and yet you have the folly to call yourself wretched." And when by this contrast he severely rebuked the imaginary sufferings of Stagyra, he analyzes this sadness in such a manner as to make us doubt if what we read comes from a Father of the fourth century, or a moralist of our own times.

"The best way to get rid of this sadness is not to love it." A profound thought, the justness of which we are now willing to acknowledge. How many heroes are there in our romances, and even in the world, who love their sadness, which they call by the fine name of melancholy, and which

they fondly cherish in their hearts. We should hate those false chagrins which disgust and torment us, but which cling to our passions by a thousand living fibres, which we have scarcely the strength to break. "There are men," said St. Chrysostom, "who love the itchings of their own wounds. And how can we hope but that the soul, consumed by this wound, which is unceasingly irritating it, should not at last succumb? How can we be surprised if all these emotions which it cherishes and excites against itself, which this vulture which it creates for itself to tear its own bowels, should not end by exhausting whatever strength and life may remain?"

What shall we then say to those things? If God has made man's heart capable of sadness, can it be a crime? Christian morality does not commit the folly of condemning the sentiments which it finds in the human soul; it does not wish to suppress them, it only wishes to regulate them. Created by our Maker, it is good if we know how to employ it. "God has put sadness in the heart," says St. Chrysostom, "not to be employed without reason and to our prejudice, not to consume and destroy us, but to bring to our service its benefits and consolations. We ought to be sad, not when we suffer, but when we do wrong. Unfortunately, man has changed the order and reversed the time. It is when we do wrong that we cast off our sadness; and when we suffer that we become grieved, and wish to rid ourselves of life." In no moralist can we find a more profound analysis of the human heart than is contained in this sentence.

The thoughts on the sadness and suicide of Stagyra lead us naturally, according to the succession of times and ideas, from the suicides of the antique stage and philosophy to the suicides of the dramas and romances,—from Ajax and Cato to Werter and Chatterton.

VI.

OF THE SENTIMENTS WHICH ACCOMPANY THE IDEA OF SUICIDE IN THE
MODERN DRAMA—HAMLET IN SHAKSPEARE—PAMELA IN RICH-
ARDSON.

THE ancient French drama, a faithful disciple of the Greek drama, has painted the suicide of passion rather than the suicide of reflection. Phædra learns that Theseus is living ; despairing then of having confessed to Hippolytus her incestuous love, she resolves to die. All her reasons for committing this fatal act, are derived from the shame which she feels for the crime of which she is guilty,—from the dread of meeting her husband in her remorse :

I know my perfidy.
 Oenone, and I am not one of those shameless women
 Who, enjoying in crime a tranquil peace,
 Know how to assume a visage which never blushes.
 I know my madness, I remember it all:
 It seems to me that already these walls, these arches,
 Are about to speak, and, ready to accuse me,
 Await my husband to disabuse him.
 Let me die ! May death deliver me from such horrors !
 Is it so great a misfortune to cease to live ?
 Death brings no terror to the wretched.

Act iii. scene 3.

These two last verses are the only general maxims which Phædra expresses in dying, if indeed we may call them by that name: for they are rather the particular sentiments and impulses of passion which take the form of a general maxim, without changing their nature. The heroines of Racine, who, like Phædra, have recourse to suicide,—Monimene in *Mithridates*, Atalida in *Bajazet*, recur to it also in moments of violent passion. Suicide is not for them

a premeditated and deliberate act, it is caused by despair; the counsels of philosophy go for nothing, and they do not trouble themselves in the least to know if there is any glory in killing one's self. We must go to the theatre of Voltaire to find this idea, cherished by antique stoicism, that suicide is a sign of courage. Not that the heroines of Voltaire kill themselves to do honor only to philosophy, it is passion which urges them to the commission of suicide; but they are not afflicted to have the air to do from the motives of philosophy, what they really do from passion. They also commend their conduct, they justify it; in short they change as much as they are able into doctrinal suicide, the desperate and violent suicide of the ancient drama. The characters of the drama of Voltaire, are certainly more dramatic and more animated than those of the plays of Seneca; but they have also the pretension to be philosophers, and it is that which spoils them. Hear Idamé in the *Orphan of China*, when she proposes to Zamti, her husband, to kill himself, in order to escape the tyranny of Gengis-Khan:

Hear me :

Do we know only how to die by the order of a king ?
 The bulls fall in sacrifice upon the altars ;
 Trembling criminals are dragged to punishment ;
 Magnanimous mortals dispose of their own fate :
 Why await death at the hands of a master ?
 Was man then born to be so dependent ?
 Let us imitate the firmness of our haughty neighbors,
 They maintain the rights of human nature,
 They live free among themselves, and die when they please ;
 An insult suffices to make them throw away their lives,
 And they dread infamy more than annihilation.
 The brave Japanese does not wait until into the coffin
 An insolent despot should plunge him in a moment :
 We have taught these brave islanders ;
 Let us learn of them the necessary virtues :
 Let us learn to die like them.

Zamti. I applaud you, and I believe,
 That extreme misfortune is above the laws.

Act v. scene 5.

Idamé and Zamti are no longer only two married people who wish to die together, they are two philosophers, who enter into a discussion with regard to the rights which a man

has to dispose of his life. Idamé does not look only to the glory of conjugal fidelity, she wishes to be a free thinker and a great character. She is wrong: the Theatre is much better adapted to the grand passions than to great characters.

Suicide, as it has been represented on the French stage in Corneille and in Racine, or in Voltaire, proceeds from the suicides which we find in the ancient poetry and philosophy,—from the suicides of Dido and Ajax, or Cato and Brutus; but it does not resemble the thoughtful and melancholy suicide of the literature of our own days. This kind of suicide has for its ancestors, the Stagyra of St. Chrysostom, and in modern times, the Hamlet of Shakspeare.

The just celebrity of the soliloquy of Hamlet, meditating upon the choice between life and death, has contributed much in our opinion, to render the representation of suicide respectable on the stage, and in our romances.

There is in English literature a singular taste, which we may call *the taste for death*. What is profound and mysterious in the idea of death; what is vague and uncertain in the terrors which surround it; what is horrible and even repulsive in the features which characterize it;—all seem to have an attraction for the English genius. This love for death, it is singular to observe in the heroes of Shakspeare. It is not only Hamlet whose melancholy and gloomy mind loves to familiarize itself with this idea. When about to drink the stupefying potion which will make her pass for dead, and so enable her to be rid of the husband whom she refuses to marry, the young and beautiful Juliet does not only think of Romeo who will come to seek her and deliver her from the tomb; she does not only think of her love; she dwells with horror upon those funereal vaults under which she is about to descend, to those abodes which are full of the bones and spectres of the dead; her imagination becomes familiar with all the visions which can terrify her in this abode of horror, if she should wake up before the time when Romeo would come to deliver her; she even describes the delirium which will perhaps take possession of her senses, and how she will go to profane in her tomb the bones of her ancestors:

“If I live, is it not very like

•The horrible conceit of death and night,

Together with the terror of the place:

As in a vault, an ancient receptacle,

Where, for these many hundred years, the bones
 Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd;
 Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,
 Lies festered in his shroud; where, as they say,
 At some hours in the night spirits resort;—
 Alas! alas! is it not like that I,
 So early waking,—what with loathsome smells,
 And shrieks like mandrakes, torn out of the earth,
 That living mortals, hearing them, run mad;—
 O! if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
 Environed with all these hideous fears?
 And madly play with my forefathers' joints?
 And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud?
 And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
 As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?"

This description, which seemed to us scarcely natural in the mouth of Juliet, was nevertheless not displeasing to the English, and it affords proof of this taste for the solemnities of death, which is one of the peculiarities of their literature. Romeo, in his turn, seems to be enraptured in the family tomb of the Capulets. True, he finds Juliet there; but no son of the genius of Homer or Sophocles, no Greek or even Italian lover would think, like Romeo, of finding Juliet more beautiful than ever in the bosom of death; his passion would not seem to be inspired with the very abode in which he saw his betrothed again. In Sophocles, Hemon kills himself upon the tomb of Antigone, as Romeo does on the tomb of Juliet; but Sophocles does not show this scene of love and death on the stage. These lugubrious vaults are repugnant to the ideas which the Greek art conceived of love and marriage. Their horror, on the contrary, seems to increase the ardor of Romeo; he feels more passionate, more enthusiastic, more amorous, if we may so speak, not only perhaps because it is the last time that his eyes will behold the beauty of Juliet, but because—am I deceived? these funereal abodes are congenial to the imagination of this lover, a son of the genius of Shakspeare. Hear him: he speaks without terror and without disgust, of what? Of those very worms which are about to devour this adored body: "It is here, says he to Juliet, it is here that I wish to take up my abode with the worms which are thy chambermaids." Not when he had quitted her at the first rays of the morning, at the earliest carols of the lark; not when the morning dawn had witnessed their

adieux full of love, had Romeo such fiery words as in this frightful abode ; and nature which awoke all smiling and radiant with joy and gladness after a night of love, spoke less eloquently to his heart than the aspect of the tomb : " O, my love ! my life ! Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, hath had no power yet upon thy beauty, thou art not conquered." While Juliet was living, never was she more ardently adored. A singular imagination, which becomes inspired and inflamed even by the idea of death ! A poetry strange and altogether novel, which owes nothing to Greece, but which is influenced by inspiration of the climate and those gloomy ideas with which Christianity loves to familiarize the minds of men ! Shakspeare has felt these two influences ; he has yielded without effort to the first, and he has even rendered the effect of it more vivid and powerful upon the temper of his countrymen ; but he has altered and perverted that of Christianity.

We will endeavor in a few words to explain these different effects.

Montesquieu, in remarking that suicides are more common in England than any where else, attributes this malady to the influence of the climate. In our opinion, Shakspeare is also censurable to a certain extent, for that disgust of life, more frequent in England than in other countries. He has familiarized his countrymen with the idea of death, has represented it on the stage, and has carelessly mingled it with ideas and sentiments which seemed least to admit of it. But Shakspeare himself only yielded to the inspiration of the North ; it is to the genius of the North that he is indebted for this taste for the melancholy, of which he has created a school in his country. While Romeo and Juliet remained within the circle of Italian literature, they did not nourish those vague and gloomy humors, which now constitute one of the peculiar characteristics of their literature. Luigi da Porto, who is the first romancer (story-teller) who has written their history, has not represented Romeo and Juliet as melancholy dreamers. When Friar Laurence proposes to Juliet to put her to sleep and to transport her to the family vault, as if she were dead : " Would you not be afraid," said he, " if you were placed near the body of your cousin Tybalt, who has been recently buried in this place ?" " O," replied Juliet joyously, " if I were compelled to pass through

hell to find Romeo, I would not hesitate." They are true Italian lovers, who, when they love, think only of their love; who have only fear of not finding each other, and not of seeing ghosts walking about amidst the tombs. The Italian Romeo, when he is in the vault of the Capulets, thinks nothing more of the charms of death; he does not even remark that Juliet is still beautiful, dead as she is, so much does the idea of death conceal from his eyes the beauty of his lady-love. We admire this weakness, or rather this bashfulness, of love, which is arrested at the presence of death, and feels for the object of its affection only the grief of having lost her. "Behold then," exclaims the Italian Romeo, "those eyes which I loved so much to see, this mouth from which flowed such sweet words, those lips which I have so often kissed, this heart which I have so often felt beating with so much joy! all now chilled by the cold hand of death. . . . And yet I still live!" This grief is natural and simple, which has no savor of melancholy, which is the kind of sadness which the genius of the North knows best how to express. The contrast between them is remarkable and characteristic. All the thoughts of the English Romeo relate to the dead body which is before his eyes; to Juliet, such as he loved to contemplate her in the tomb, still beautiful, though lifeless; while the thoughts of the Italian Romeo have relation to Juliet, such as she was when she lived, beautiful and beloved; and the Italian and the English Romeo have each the thoughts and sentiments, which their climates inspire. In the South, life and beauty are sacred things, from which man repels the thought of death, as if it were a sort of profanation; in the North, man cheerfully recalls this idea, as if to feel more sensibly by the contrast, the charm of life and beauty. At Verona, when Juliet, despairing on account of Romeo's exile, requests Friar Laurence to give her poison: "I will not give you poison, my child," exclaims the old priest: "it would be too great a pity for a girl so young and beautiful as you, to die!" These are touching words, coming from the heart of an old man, full of this regard for life and beauty, which is one of the characteristic traits of the genius of the South. At London, on the contrary, you see, when Romeo wishes to purchase poison to destroy himself, how Shakspeare dwells with a sort of pleasure upon this apothecary who vends death by reason of his poverty; upon this poison which *would easily kill a man*

who had the strength of twenty men ;* upon those gloomy and repulsive ideas which are so pleasing to his genius, and that of his countrymen.

Such is in Shakspeare the influence which the climate has exercised upon poetry.

We will now remark the influence of Christianity, and how Shakspeare has perverted it.

It is true that before Shakspeare as well as after him the Christian pulpit loved to represent to man the dust of his tomb.† But according to the Christian doctrine, death is not a mysterious enigma to man : it is a judgment which God pronounces upon the life which we have led here below ; a judgment favorable to the good and dreadful to the wicked. In Shakspeare, on the contrary, when Hamlet meditates upon death, it becomes obscure and incomprehensible.

To die—to sleep—[*says Hamlet,*]

To sleep, perchance to dream. Aye, there's the rub.

For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come,

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

Must give us pause.

In thus questioning the future, Shakspeare has represented the spirit of doubt and skepticism, and for this reason, Hamlet‡ becomes the ancestor of the heroes of Lord Byron.

* *Romeo and Juliet*, Act v. sc. 1.

† M. Olier, the founder of the Congregation of St. Sulpice, took his hand in the last days of his life, and said to it : "Body of sin, you must soon return to dust."—FENELON. *Sp. Lett.*

‡ It is among the most legitimate, and among the highest provinces of the poet, to depict those contrasts which subject him to this charge—to show vice in the virtuous, and virtue in the wicked ; and this unquestionable truth in art once granted, it follows, as the very condition of fiction, that to a hero thus selected, human interest must be given. You cannot blame a poet for making a faulty hero interesting, unless you contend that heroes of fiction must be perfect ; by which dogma you would at once cut off from the poet the whole realm of the human heart, and separate his ethics from the representation of truth and nature. This love, indeed, of probing the sores of character—of representing the infirmities of the intellectual man—was not more remarkable in Goëthe than in Shakspeare, who, in the whole range of his dramas, has never presented to us a single male image of perfect virtue ; who, in *Macbeth*, in *Othello*, in *Angelo*, in *Shylock*, in *Hamlet*, (the last so Goëthe-like, that if Shakspeare had never created it, one might predict that Goëthe would have done so,) lays bare, with fearful precision, the weakness of the wise—the crime of the virtuous. It is in vain to deny that our paramount interest in all these plays is with the erring or the infirm.

They are begotten of him; the gloomy and blasphemous irony of Manfred proceeds from the soliloquy of Hamlet. Shakspeare has derived his meditations and his representations of death from the Christian pulpit; but he has applied them differently, and has diverted them from their proper object. This description of death, which should only serve to restrain the passions of men, he has shown in Romeo how love itself can become enamored of it, in order to move us with more effect; and this meditation of death, this fear of the just in awaiting the judgments of the Lord, he has made the terror of a man who, ready to kill himself, hesitates, uncertain of what may happen beyond the tomb.

The imitation of English and German literature, has caused death in our own days to become in France also one of the common subjects of poetry. Formerly we found death only at the Church, and heard it treated as a serious and solemn thing, full of grave teachings. Now we find it every where in literature, set off and adorned in such a manner as to form a contrast and strike the imagination; sometimes exaggerating its horror in order to increase the emotion by fear; and now, with its head crowned with roses, and a smiling countenance,* in order to captivate the wretched who despair of life. It is to the influence of Shakspeare that we must attribute this frequent and almost profane representation of the idea of death in our modern literature.

But who shall say that Shakspeare, while interesting us in the hero, sought to pervert our conscience into admiring the defect: that it was his object to decorate ambitious murder or jealous ferocity; licentious hypocrisy or implacable revenge; or to womanize the intellect, and emasculate the will, by all the doubts and scruples which make up the philosophy of Hamlet?—Hamlet, that great fountain-head of modern sentiment, from which have gushed a thousand rivulets of melancholy and skepticism; Hamlet, that perpetual mirror to minds fluctuating between the visible and the unseen, the actual and the ideal, the stern demands of uncomprehended duty, and the desire to escape from practical action into visionary self-commune; Hamlet, in which is shown the mysterious prototype of what man would be with virtue and with wisdom, but without—WILL!—*Bulwer*.

* . . . "It is only the lachrymose sinner who calls death a skeleton. He is, on the contrary, a sweet and lovely child, with a face as rosy as the god of love, but less deceitful: a silent and helpful genius, who offers his arm to the weary soul of the pilgrim, who assists him in ascending the degrees of time, opens to him the magic palace of eternal splendor, waves him a friendly signal, and disappears."—SCHILLER. *Kaballe und Liebe*.

Fondness for death and doubt of the future are the principal traits which characterize this poet. To these general traits, we may add the particular character of Hamlet, who although he does not kill himself, has become the type of the heroes of suicide : a kind of undecided and feeble Orestes, who is uncertain of the crime which he must avenge, and who, above all, doubts if he will have the strength to fulfil the mission which he receives from Heaven, a mission which is dreadful, and revealed with a mystery which disorders the reason of Hamlet. Orestes is driven on by fatality : he does not hesitate. Hamlet, although urged on also by fatality, and admonished by the ghost of his father, preserves, nevertheless, his free will ; but he preserves it only to waver in his resolutions, and to vacillate from one idea to another. He reflects more than he acts, and pushes nothing to extremes. Sometimes he is terrified at the horrible duty which he is compelled to perform : he seems to deliberate with himself if he cannot avoid it by committing suicide ; but he recoils before the uncertainty of the future, and discourses eloquently upon that dread which man has of the unknown. Now he wishes to kill the king, who has assassinated his father ; but he stops because the king is engaged in prayer, and he does not wish to send him to Paradise ; so deep is his hatred, and yet so ingenious is he in finding reasons for not acting ! He wishes also to punish his mother, but is satisfied with terrifying her with his words. He is not more decided in his love than in his revenge : he loves Ophelia, but does not dare to trust to his love the secret of his feigned madness. He speaks sometimes as a lover, and at other times like a madman, and this strange mixture of contradictory words ends in deranging also the intellect of Ophelia. It is not until she has been laid in the tomb, that Hamlet is willing openly to confess the love which he had for her : for it is the peculiarity of undecided and weak minds, never to know with certainty what they want until it is no longer in their power to obtain it. This very madness which Hamlet begins by feigning, ends in disordering his own reason ; and it affords a salutary lesson, which is very applicable to those proud and weak characters, who dream the more in proportion as they act the less. It is not good for man to indulge in all sorts of reveries. These singular feelings and strange thoughts which come into our minds, please us at first, because they make us believe

that we possess something original and above the vulgar ; we do not resist the inclination to give expression to these odd sentiments, so that we may be regarded as distinguished from the common herd. This idea has a tendency to excite the ambition of all men, especially in times and countries where equality prevails. But this little charlatanism is not without danger for ourselves. We begin by wishing to dupe others, we end by duping ourselves ; we unconsciously obtain the elevation to which we aspired, and we lose our reason in wishing like Hamlet to sport with madness.

The preponderance of thought and speech over action, together with a fatal indecision of will, constitute the basis of the character of Hamlet, such as Shakspeare has conceived it. It is this which lies at the bottom of all the heroes of suicide. If we set aside those grand sentiments of which they make parade, if we penetrate into those unquiet souls, we find nothing but indecision and feebleness. They prefer rather to indulge in speculation than in action, until, in order to rid themselves of the burdens of existence, they seek refuge in eternal repose.

It is not our purpose to preach against suicide. Our only object is to show in what manner the idea of suicide is represented in our modern dramas and romances, and to see if, in painting this melancholy love of death, they affect us as much as the Greeks do, in expressing the love of life.

We do not censure the dramatic poets for introducing suicide on the stage. All that appertains to man, belongs to literature. But, in order to move us, this thought of death, which the man has conceived, should struggle in his soul with the love of life. He must not kill himself too easily or too quickly, and without sufficient cause ; otherwise we cannot become interested in his fate. Shakspeare, who has attributed to Hamlet the idea of suicide, has taken care to arrest him in time, while yet upon the borders of the abyss, well knowing that the struggle with death is more interesting than death itself. Do not believe that in exhibiting a hero who resists this fatal idea, and, in making the denouement, inclines towards death rather than towards life, that the scene would be less interesting. In the drama, the denouement is of less consequence than the action ; it is the action alone which fascinates and pleases. An author, then, if he has not given to his hero this fatal weakness which disables him from

supporting the burdens of life ; if he has only rendered him unfortunate, but not by his own fault or by his imagination ; if he has given him sorrows instead of remorse and reveries ; if, in a word, he has given him a conscience firm and pure, an author may easily show how the idea of suicide may cross the mind of his hero, and how he resists it. The scene will excite pity although the hero does not die, and the denouement may be happy and moral, without ceasing to be interesting. But we must not forget that this depends upon the character which the poet gives to his hero.

In making these observations, we are reminded of a scene in the romance of *Pamela*,* which is exceedingly touching. Pamela is a young, intelligent, and beautiful servant maid, with whom her master becomes desperately smitten, but she repels the offer of his love. After persecuting her for a long time, conquered by her virtue, he finally marries her. Pamela, who has been locked up by her master in his residence, in the north of England, and placed under the surveillance of a cruel woman, and fearing that her master would use violence in overcoming her resistance, endeavors to escape from her confinement. She descends, during the night, out of the window, and in attempting to climb over the wall of the inclosure, she falls and is wounded. She has no hope of escaping her persecutors ! She is entirely at a loss to know what to do, and what is to become of her !

“ God forgive me ! But a sad thought came just then into my head ! I tremble to think of it ! Indeed my apprehensions of the usage I should meet with, had like to have made me miserable for ever ! O my dear, dear parents, forgive your poor child ! But being then quite desperate, I crept along till I could raise myself on my staggering feet ; and

* The influence of Richardson upon the fiction and poetry of Europe was not only vast at the time, but, enduring still, it must endure for ever. In vain his language grows obsolete, in vain his minuteness has become wearisome, in vain the young race of novel readers leave him on the shelf : to those somewhat tedious pages turns every genius who aspires to rise in fiction ; from them can, though with toil and study, be best learned the art of extracting from the homeliest details the noblest pathos. In “ *Clarissa* ” is beheld that true spirit of tragedy which first dispensed with kings and heroes, and the paraphernalia of the outward stage ; teaching how the compass of all grandeur in fiction can be attained by him who can describe the affection, and comprehend the virtue, of one human being.—BULWER.

away limped I. What to do, but to throw myself into the pond, and so put a period to all my griefs in this world! But O! to find them infinitely aggravated (had I not by the divine grace been withheld) in a miserable eternity! As I have escaped this temptation, (blessed be God for it!) I will tell you my conflicts on this dreadful occasion, that the divine mercies may be magnified in my deliverance, that I am yet on this side the dreadful gulf from which there could have been no return."

Seated, or rather lying, on the margin of the pond, Pamela considers her misfortunes, and the impossibility of escaping from the infamous condition to which the passion of her master destined her:

"And then, thought I, (and O! that thought was surely of the devil's instigation; for it was very soothing and powerful with me,) these wicked wretches, who have no remorse, no pity on me, will then be moved to lament their misdoings; and when they see the dead corpse of the unhappy Pamela dragged out to these dewy banks, and lying breathless at their feet, they will find that remorse to soften their obdurate heart which now has no place there! And my master, my angry master, will then forget his resentments, and say, 'O, this is the unhappy Pamela, that I have so causelessly persecuted and destroyed! Now do I see she preferred her honesty to her life,' he will say, 'and is no hypocrite nor deceiver, but really was the innocent creature she pretended to be!' Then, thought I, perhaps he will shed a few tears over the poor corpse of his persecuted servant; and though he may give out it was love and disappointment, and that, perhaps, he will be inwardly grieved, and order me a decent funeral, and save me, or rather this part of me, from the dreadful stake and the highway interment; and the young men and maidens all around my dear father's will pity poor Pamela! But O! I hope I shall not be the subject of their ballads and elegies; but that my memory, for the sake of my dear father and mother, may quickly slide into oblivion."

We are not disposed to interrupt this narrative by any reflections. But we cannot refrain from remarking the sentiment of love which is mingled with the sorrow which Pamela feels at the idea of the tears which her master will shed over her tomb, an involuntary love, which she does not confess, but which she feels, and even unconsciously expresses,

when she thinks with a kind of tenderness of the affliction which her death will cause to her master. This love is divined rather than seen; it is modestly disclosed in the midst of those gloomy thoughts which agitate Pamela; and yet, all weak and timid as it is, the Christian soul of Pamela feels that it is guilty, for she reproaches herself. We are pleased with the modesty which makes her shrink from the lamentations which will be expressed over her fate. There are some persons who would kill themselves so as to get people to talk of them; they would hazard their lives for a moment's notoriety. She requests that she may be forgotten; she dreads publicity as others court it. But, with such good sentiments in her heart, it was impossible that Pamela should perish, and her virtues defend and save her from this thought of suicide with which her misfortunes had inspired her.

We see, then, how the thought of suicide may affect us without the emotion at all injuring us in a moral point of view. But to come, like Pamela, near to suicide, and yet to escape it, it was necessary that she should have such a character as Richardson has given her: she must have the fortitude which is derived from religion. We feel that Pamela will overcome the temptation which has assailed her, because she has already resisted the temptation of another sort, and that she will exhibit as much strength against suicide as she had against seduction; we feel that she possesses this moral vitality which will enable her to support the pains and burdens of life. There are characters, on the other hand, whom we perceive at the first glance are predestined to die. Ardent and enthusiastic, they want fortitude and patience: life is not made for them. Such is the Werter of Goëthe.*

* In fact, it is the merit of this wonderful man, that his whole nature was especially plastic and impressionable. Every influence of his time stamped itself on his intellect, to be reproduced in new forms by his genius. Does the age incline to sentiment? he sounds its abysses. To irony? the sneer of Voltaire seems venomless beside the icy smile of the fiend he calls from hell, to mock at human knowledge and desecrate human love! Does the age yearn for pastorals and family life? he turns from courts and the seventh heaven of poetry to borrow from homely Voss, and ruins him by the riches he extracts from the loan. In his "Werter" he concentrates the history of an epoch in his country—the epoch of the Rousseau mania. But though the "Nouvelle Héloïse" is incontestably the origin of "Werter," those who regard it as a mere copy, do it miserable injustice. There is more rhetorical eloquence in one page of the "*Nouvelle Héloïse*" than in the whole of "*Werter*;"

Goëthe had not created him to live; and he knew it. "The poor man," said Goëthe, in his memoirs, "does not doubt that the evil is without remedy, and that a deadly worm has eaten in its bud the youth of Werter."

What is, then, this deadly worm, which, according to Goëthe, has secretly devoured the youth of Werter? Let us not be deceived; it is the spirit of doubt, it is the genius of the eighteenth century; and it is not only Werter whom the worm has destroyed, but also Goëthe himself. Goëthe belongs to the eighteenth century; he is its disciple and heir; he is a doubter and a skeptic, like the eighteenth century, but is also a poet. It is that which has in some measure concealed his skepticism; and moreover, as he felt with the admirable discipline which he gave to his genius, that skepticism was hurtful to poetry, he has endeavored to correct its effects, and for that purpose he has called to his aid all the resources of art and science. He has worshipped nature. He was a Pantheist, and has placed God every where, to make amends for not having him in his heart. He has adored Greece, and has offered a kind of worship to beauty, such as Greece conceived it in the arts, striving to excite enthusiasm by the aid of the arts. He has adored the South, and has sung of the sweet land of the orange, because the South is the land of strong beliefs, and abhors skepticism. He has also adored the middle ages, which was not a skeptical era; he has sought every where to heal the wound of the insect which destroyed his youth, but has sought in vain. Skepticism lies at the bottom of all his enthusiasm, and the very diversity of his inspirations proves his indifference. He is

but there is more nature in one page of "*Werter*" than in the whole of the "*Nouvelle Héloïse*." Though Goëthe does not seem to us to be blamed for following the tendency of his genius into directions in which the peculiar delicacy and subtlety of his intellect insured him such success; and though a hundred years hence, we believe that what Menzel and other depreciators consider immoral, will not mislead a single imitator or corrupt a single youth; yet it must be conceded that the *direct* object of his works was not to make man more manly and his desires more elevated. We say the *direct* object; for indirectly, and sooner or later, whatever makes man wiser, nerves his mind and purifies his emotions: and there may be truth in the theory, that art is to be cultivated as art; that the beautiful must reflect indifferently on its tranquil mirror whatever *convention* deems moral or immoral: for to whatever is really and essentially vicious, the beautiful itself is opposed.—
BULWER.

neither philosopher nor religionist, neither Christian nor Pagan, neither courtier nor citizen, neither of ancient nor modern times, neither of the North nor of the South ; or rather he is all these at once. He is the echo of nature ; he repeats all her songs, all her harmonies ; but he did not add this song which we have in the soul ; this song which is, if we may so speak, the melody of the soul, and which accords so well with the harmonies which come from nature. Ask Goëthe to represent man and nature in all their variety and in all their extent ; he will do it. There is only one thing which we must not ask of him : it is to represent himself. The *me* is wanting in Goëthe ; not the *me* which knows that he is a great poet, and who wishes to be it, but the *me* who has a thought and a principle which he wishes to prevail ; this *me*, in fine, which believes in something. It is this *me* whom the worm has devoured in Goëthe and Werter.

VII.

SUICIDE IN THE WERTER OF GOETHE AND IN THE CHATTERTON OF DE VIGNY.

In the seventeenth century, when religion prevailed, there were men, who, disdaining ordinary devotion, aimed at a higher, and carried into their piety the excitement of an over-wrought imagination. Fenelon, in his *Spiritual Letters*, counselled these restless and exalted souls to permit their minds to enjoy a little repose. "*Requiescite pusillum*. It is dangerous," said he, "to have the inner man too much agitated." Thus he dreaded this preference which man is often disposed to give to the inner life over the outer, to contemplation over action. He knew that many preferred rather to dream than to act; he knew particularly that this serious melancholy did not calm the passions, but on the contrary, excited them until they became a disease of the soul.

Werter, with other ideas and sentiments than those of the seventeenth century, is also one of those *ardelions* of the inner life; and it is his misfortune. "I look within myself," said he, "and I find there a world, but rather in gloomy apprehensions and forebodings, than in reality and in action." Such is the world in which he loves to live. His friends in vain persuade him to follow some profession. "Become the attaché of an embassy," said they—"it is not too confining." Werter, however, refuses for a long time. One day, when he was melancholy and sad from the hopeless love which he cherishes for Charlotte, he accepts the appointment of secretary to the embassy. He prepares dispatches, seals letters, and sends off couriers. He has an occupation. But, what is strange, and calculated to disconcert the most firm resolutions—he very soon perceives that his ambassador is a fool, and, at an evening party at the residence of the minister, he meets two or three barons or marquises, who are impertinent.

This trial is too severe for Werter; and he tenders his resignation. A few days afterwards, he attaches himself to a prince who is amiable and affable; but he soon discovers that this prince also has a great fault. "He values," said Werter, "my mind and my talents more than my heart, of which alone I am vain, and which is the only source of all my strength, of all my happiness, and of all my misery." Thus he always withdraws within himself, scorning the mind and talents which are the instruments of the man who acts, and hastens to return to the inner life; for it is there that he lives, and moves, and has his being.

Having quitted his ambassador because he was a fool, and the prince because he over-prized talents, Werter abandons all business. And in truth he was right; for what profession can we find, where we do not come in contact with rogues, fools, impertinent and good-for-nothing people? "I am only a traveller and a pilgrim upon earth," says he to his friends.

And are we better than him? Yes, if we have an occupation and persevere in it; not only because employment is the means of adding to our personal worth the strength of character which is derived from a profession, recognized in society; but because the professions (and it is this which constitutes their chief merit) are the fulfilment of the divine law of labor. God has placed us in this world to act and not to dream; to all our thoughts, to all our sentiments, he has connected action as a necessary condition: worship to piety, the care of a family to love, the cultivation of the arts to the idea of the beautiful. God is never satisfied with thought alone, because it very soon subsides into revery.* This divine law ennobles all the professions of men; it alleviates the fatigues of labor, it lightens the tediousness of business. "I would be very happy to go to see you," writes Fenelon to a friend, "but I have no time. I am compelled to confer with a metropolitan chapter about a suit, which I must dispatch quickly, so that I may write my letters, and examine

* Revery has in all times inspired a disgust for labor, and led to suicide. There is in *Stobæus* an account of a young man who, compelled by his father to undertake agricultural work, hung himself, leaving a letter, in which he declared that agriculture was too monotonous a trade; that it was always necessary to sow in order to reap, and to reap in order to sow, and that this circle was endless and insupportable.

my accounts. Oh ! how miserable would these thorny details render life, if the will of God did not embellish and sweeten all the occupations which he has given us."

This reverence for the will of God, this love for the divine law which makes life easy and pleasant, is what Werter does not possess, because, being a child of the eighteenth century, he has not the simple and firm faith which his fathers had ; and that is the reason why this pilgrim and sojourner upon earth, as he loves to call himself, did not finish his pilgrimage. In this pilgrimage of life, which is painful and hard, those alone reach the end of it, who walk in the path which God has marked out for them. Those who only walk in the path which is pleasing to themselves, run a great risk of having their pilgrimage cut short.

Walter, such as Goëthe had created him, could not live. When he wished to make his characters live, he made them different from Werter. See his Hermann, in his *Hermann and Dorothea*. What a simple and firm character ! What a masculine heart and mind ! What a contrast with Werter ! The love which he has for Dorothea is not for him a subject of profound and subtle reflections ; he does not remark, like Werter, that *since he loves, no faculty of his soul remains inactive, and that he believes that he is more than he is, because he is then all that he can be* ;—no : he thinks only that in times of war and disaster, it is good for a man to marry, " because there were many fine women who require the protection of a husband, and that we need the consoling looks of a woman in the hour of sorrow and affliction." We recognize in these sentiments, at once manly and tender, men who were born to live. But what do you wish Werter to do ? Did he wish, and were he able to seduce Charlotte—he would then perhaps live. But what would there be in this history so strange and peculiar ? Would it be superior to a thousand and one histories of the same kind ? Was it, in fact, difficult for Goëthe to tell us, that a young man endeavored to make himself loved by a young woman ? And yet, if this history has not this denouement, it can only have one other, that of suicide. It is not that Werter has not many qualities which would dispose a man to love life. Thus he is good ; but his goodness is of a piece with his character : it is soft and contemplative ; it resembles in no respect, the active and patient goodness of Hermann. Werter loves man and nature ; and even in the

first transport of his love, when he had only experienced the sweetness of it, Werter loved every body, the village conversations, the prattling of children, the stories of old women; he loved to see the vapors of the morning rising in the valley, the sun at noonday in the forest, the grass growing on the margin of the streams, the insects in the grass,—life every where, God every where. But let us not be deceived. This mingled tenderness and love which he feels for every thing, was the effect of this cheerfulness of the heart which love inspires. These outpourings of the heart do not continue long; the heart soon becomes hardened, and fixes itself upon the beloved object; very soon the lover, without being conscious of it, knows but two persons, his betrothed and himself. He loves himself so much the more, since he feels that he is beloved, and the love which he feels elevates him in his own eyes. "She loves me," said Werter to his friend; "you may imagine how happy I am, how much (I say it confidentially to you, for you will understand me) I adore myself, since she loves me." This expression admirably portrays this egotism which constitutes the foundation of love; a charming egotism of which we are unconscious, and imagine that we are living for another when we are living only for ourselves!

Happy and proud of this love, Werter does not know what to do; he cannot marry Charlotte; he cannot, nor does he wish to seduce her. He has now reached that point where, as Lord Edward said to Saint Preux, being forced to act like an honorable man, he prefers to die. But in Goëthe, this idea of suicide, of which Jean Jacques Rousseau has only made an eloquent controversy between Lord Edward and Saint Preux, becomes the subject of his romance. In proportion as Werter loses the hope of a success which he does not even desire, he is inclined to commit suicide. The works of nature which formerly enchanted his senses and his soul, now sadden and oppress him. Formerly when he was happy, but when his love for Charlotte "had made his blood boil," he went to Wahleim; there he saw in a little cottage a peasant woman working with her children around her; he played himself with the youngest, and on returning home he wrote to a friend "that nothing so much calms the passions as seeing such a creature as she, who in peace and happiness ran within the narrow circle of her ex-

istence, finding each day what was necessary for her comfort, and seeing the leaves fall without thinking of any thing but the approach of winter." Now this quiet repose seems irksome, this labor dull, because his own happiness formerly threw a charm over the sight of human occupations.

We have explained the character of Werter, such as we have conceived it. The little taste which we have for this sort of character, (common even among people who do not kill themselves,) does not however prevent us from recognizing the interest with which Goëthe has invested his hero. We do not love Werter, but we love to see the struggles which he makes against the disgust of life. We love to see how the idea of death by degrees gets the better of his mind. Goëthe well knew that whatever disgust we may have for life, there is nevertheless a great distance between this disgust and a determination to die. Even in those who have most firmly resolved to die, what contradictory sentiments, what different emotions in the interval between the first and the last thought! The soul then seems to become more alive and sensible than ever. It attaches itself with a kind of mournful joy to the recollections of life, which seems more pleasing as we are about to quit it, and without ceasing to wish to die, it breaks out in unavailing regrets; it feels itself smitten with an indescribable sensibility, which causes the slightest circumstance, even a word, a motion, or a look, to shock and wound it. But in this very impatience, we feel the struggle and the revolt of life against a fatal resolution, which a man who has reached this point has no longer the power to change and no longer the courage to accomplish. The spectacle of man in these moments of hesitation and suffering is full of interest, and it is on this account that Goëthe has prolonged the history of the last days of Werter. The details are apparently minute and trivial, and admirably calculated to hurry him on to suicide. It was the Sunday before Christmas. Christmas is a holiday for children in Germany: and when Werter goes to see Charlotte, he finds her occupied in preparing playthings for her brothers and sisters. She had determined to do every thing in order to avoid meeting Werter; she felt that it was for his honor and her repose. She was embarrassed in seeing him; yet they entered into a conversation.

" 'You also,' said Charlotte, (concealing her embarrass-

ment under an amiable smile,) 'you also will have pleasant Christmases, if you are very prudent.' 'And what do you mean by being very prudent?' exclaimed he. 'How must I become so?' 'How?—Tuesday is Christmas eve,' said she; 'my father and the children will come to see me. You must come also. But not before . . . '—Werter was disconcerted. 'I beg you,' said she, 'for the sake of my repose, that it may be so. This cannot continue thus; no, it cannot.' He turned away his eyes from her and began to take long strides across the room, repeating to himself, 'This cannot continue thus.' Charlotte, who perceived the miserable state into which these words had thrown him, sought, by a thousand questions, to distract him from his gloomy meditations; but it was in vain. 'No, Charlotte,' said he, 'I will never see you more.' 'Why then, Werter,' replied she, 'you can, you must see us again. Oh! why were you born with this ardent and uncontrollable passion which you have for every thing to which you become attached? I entreat you,' said she in taking hold of his hand, 'be master of yourself. What happiness your talents and accomplishments would procure you, if you would only break this fatal attachment for a creature who can do nothing but pity you!' He looked at her with a melancholy air. She took his hand. 'Be calm for a moment,' said she. 'Do you not perceive that you are hastening to your destruction? Why should it be for me? I, who am the property of another—precisely me? I fear, yes, I fear that it is the very impossibility of possessing me, which renders your desires so ardent.' He withdrew his hand from hers, and regarding her with a fixed and sad look: 'It is well,' exclaimed he, 'it is very well! This remark is perhaps from Albert! It is profound! very profound!' 'Any body could have made it,' she replied. 'Is there no woman in the whole world who can fill the wishes of your heart? Go in search of her; I am sure you will find her. I have grieved for a long time for the solitude in which you have shut yourself up. A voyage will certainly do you good. Seek an object worthy of your affections, and then return. We will enjoy together the felicity which a sincere friendship bestows.'

"You may print that," said Werter, with a bitter smile, 'and recommend it to all governesses. Ah! Charlotte, give me some respite; all will be set aright.' 'Ah well, Werter! but do not return before Christmas eve!' He wished to

answer; Albert entered. They saluted each other with coolness. They walked by each other with an embarrassed air, and very soon ceased to speak. Albert did the same. Then he asked his wife about some business with which he had charged her. In learning that they were not attended to, he spoke some words which Werter thought very cold and harsh. He wished to go, but could not. He hesitated until eight o'clock, and his temper became still more soured. When he had taken up his hat and cane, Albert requested him to remain; but he saw that this was only from politeness; he therefore thanked him coldly, and departed.

"He returned home, took the light from the hands of his servant, and retired to his chamber alone. He began to sob, and to walk backwards and forwards with long strides in his chamber, speaking to himself with a loud voice, and in a very excited manner. He ended by throwing himself on his bed with his clothes on, where his servant found him, who entered his chamber to ask him if he did not wish to have his boots taken off. He consented, and told him not to enter his chamber in the morning until he was called. On Monday morning he commenced to write to Charlotte the following letter, which, after his death, was found in his secretary, and which was remitted to Charlotte:

"It is a thing resolved, Charlotte; I wish to die; and I write to you in cold blood, without any romantic exaltation, on the morning of the day when I will see you for the last time. When you will read this, my beloved, the tomb will have already covered the cold remains of the unfortunate man who did not know a sweeter pleasure, in the last moments of his life, than to converse with you. I have passed a terrible yet profitable night. It has confirmed and fixed my resolution. I wish to die! When I tore myself away from you yesterday, what dreadful convulsions did I not experience! What terrible heartaches! How my life, consuming itself near you, without joy, without hope, chilled me, and filled me with horror! I could scarcely reach my chamber; I threw myself on my knees, entirely beside myself; and, O God! you granted me the relief of bitter tears. A thousand projects, a thousand ideas, struggled in my soul; at last there remained but one idea: I wish to die! I retired to my bed, and this morning, when I awoke, calm and tranquil, I found still in my heart this resolution, firm and un-

changed: I wish to die! It is not despair, it is the certainty that I have finished my career, and that I will sacrifice myself for you. Yes, Charlotte, why should I conceal it from you! It is necessary that one of us should perish, and I prefer that it should be me. . . Be it so! When, upon the evening of a beautiful summer's day, you ascend the mountain, think of me then, and remember how often I have walked this valley! Look, then, towards the graveyard, and see how the wind waves the long grass over my tomb, at the last rays of the setting sun! . . . I was calm when I began; but now these images affect me so much, that I weep like a child.' "

And if we ourselves perhaps weep in reading this letter, it is because it is full of the sentiment of life, concealed, or rather extinguished, by the determination to die. We see, when Werter is contemplating suicide, how all his thoughts refer to life; how he continually calls it to remembrance when about to quit it! Charlotte will read this letter which he has written; Charlotte, in walking through the valley which he loved, will remember him; Charlotte will see the wind waving the grass which covers his tomb, in the last rays of the setting sun! We see the images of life every-where, every where the idea of those who will live. The thought of death seems to be there only to give to those ideas something more vivid and touching. There is the same art and the same interest in the recital which precedes and introduces this letter. This embarrassment of Albert and Werter, this careless conversation, began, abandoned, and resumed; this sourness, becoming increased at every word; this cold invitation to supper; this cold refusal; what are all these but the daily occurrences of life, when that which is ordinary and indifferent becomes terrible and solemn; when a great and dolorous emotion increases it by the grandeur of the contrast? There were, perhaps, between Albert and Werter, twenty other evenings of this kind; but this last is more affecting than the others, because it is the last evening of Werter.

We will not close our reflections upon Werter, without saying a word with regard to the influence which the *Nouvelle Héloïse* of Rousseau has had upon the Werter of Goëthe. Werter is of the school of Saint Preux. His enthusiastic love is love such as Rousseau conceived it. Until Rousseau, the literature of the eighteenth century only treated of frivolous

and licentious love ; it was not a passion, it was a pleasure. Rousseau represented it otherwise. Voltaire had created Candide and Cunigonde ; Rousseau had created Julia and Saint Preux ; and it is curious to remark the effect which these two contradictory lessons had on their contemporaries. The school of Voltaire preserved this indifference, which is consoled in thinking that, even in love, all is for the best in the best possible of worlds ; but it borrowed from Rousseau the exaltation of Saint Preux ; and what is remarkable, they made these two harmonize without making any great effort. The romantic passions succeeded to the good fortunes of profligates ; but it was a change of the mode rather than a revolution in morals : they used high-sounding words and mean sentiments, moderate emotions and enthusiastic conversations.

Goëthe has not borrowed from Rousseau the passionate enthusiasm of his Werter ; he seems also to have borrowed from the *Nouvelle Héloïse* something of the subject of his romance. Saint Preux loves Julia and does not marry her : so does Werter love Charlotte and does not marry her. But this love of another's wife places Saint Preux, as it does Werter, in a false position, although she is not guilty, and this situation cannot last long. Rousseau withdraws himself from this embarrassment by the sickness and the death of Julia : Goëthe by the suicide of Werter. A novelist* of our days, who is also of the school of Rousseau, seems to have sought in her romance of *Jacques*, if there was not another denouement possible to histories of this kind. But he has very soon felt, with the knowledge of the human heart which he almost always exhibits, that that was impracticable ; and Jacques, the husband, after having endeavored, like Albert in Goëthe, not to offend too much the love of Octavia for Ferdinand ; after having, like M. de Volmar, more patient still than Albert, admitted into his house the lover of his wife ; after having conducted himself as if he were not her husband, and having done through systematic policy what others do from cowardice and baseness ; Jacques, seeing that his situation is false and constrained, resolved to commit suicide. Thus the lover in *Werter*, the wife in *Héloïse*, and the husband in *Jacques*, die to escape their embarrassment. As in histories of this kind, among three persons there is evidently always one too many, and it becomes necessary to choose whom they will sacrifice, and

* George Sand.

the choice changes according to times and tastes,—Goëthe and Rousseau sacrifice the lover or the wife; in our days, we sacrifice the husband.

This similarity between some of the events of the *Héloïse* and *Werter* is not, in our opinion, the most singular analogy between the two romances. There is another much more striking, which we will notice. In *Werter* and in *Héloïse*, in *Emile* and in the *Confessions*, there is a sensibility which, notwithstanding the exaltation of the language, partakes much more of the sensibility of the senses than of the soul; and it is in truth sensibility such as the eighteenth century understood it. Werter loves to hear Charlotte speak with emotion of the beautiful romance of Goldsmith, the *Vicar of Wakefield*; but he loves also to see the lips and the eyes which speak so well. When Charlotte, at the aspect of the country which becomes reanimated after the storm, is moved to tears, and exclaims, O Klopstock! Werter, immediately calling to mind the sublime ode which occupied his thoughts, weeps also; but he sheds tears upon the hand of Charlotte, “which he moistens with delicious tears.” Fire runs in the veins of Werter when by chance his finger touches that of Charlotte. He loves Albert, who must marry Charlotte, because Albert is good, wise, and virtuous; and, nevertheless, he is unwilling to see him. Why? Because he is the husband of Charlotte. This idea spoils all the virtues of Albert. In fine, when his amorous despair commences, “Alas!” says he, “this void, this terrible void which I feel in my bosom! . . . I often think, if you could once,—only once press it against your heart, all this void would be filled.”

This mixture of passionate sentiments and ardent emotions constitutes also the basis of the heroes of J. J. Rousseau, in his romances. It is Rousseau as he has described himself in his *Confessions*. The soul of Rousseau was noble and exalted; but his heart, to speak as the eighteenth century, was sensual: he thinks purely, he feels grossly. He was spiritual, but it was the spiritualism of a libertine age; and, in his *Confessions*, his love stories have this mixed character; they are at once exalted and brutal. It is perhaps for this very reason that they are so pleasing to youth; for they gratify at the same time the first ardors of the senses and the first enthusiasms of the soul.

This sensibility, half sensual and half moral, which we observe in Werter and in Rousseau, is a bad preservative against thoughts of suicide. "*To be carnally-minded is death,*" says St. Paul; "*but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.*" Pamela and Werter admirably exemplify, in our opinion, this verse of St. Paul. Pamela, who resists the passion of her master and the inclination of her own heart,—Pamela lives, by virtue of a strength of mind elevated by religion, above material emotions. *To be spiritually-minded is life and peace.* Werter, overcome by his passion—and a passion which borrows much from the ardor of the senses—Werter dies; and it is his passion, it is his sensibility, which has become the mistress of his soul, which drives him to the commission of suicide.

But among the different passions which urge men to suicide, there are differences which it is well to remark, especially when we study the manner in which literature expresses and represents the idea of suicide; for on the expression of this idea and this emotion with which it inspires us, depends much of the passion which it gives birth to. We are more disposed to excuse the suicide which a strong and violent passion urges us to commit, and especially one of those passions which are common to all men, than the suicide which a particular passion or an exceptional malady produces. The more we are disposed to excuse, the more we are disposed to be affected; for there is always some approbation mingled with our pity. Thus Werter, who dies from love, affects us more than Chatterton, who dies from wounded pride and from a literary vanity, which, of all the vanities in the world, is the most sensitive, but for which the public has the least indulgence, because it is that with which it sympathizes the least.

But what is singular, and at the same time melancholy to notice, is that, in proportion as suicides are more numerous, it seems that the causes are less serious. People do not now kill themselves to defend their honor, as Pamela contemplated, or from love, like Werter. By cultivating our sensibility too assiduously, we have acquired too sensitive a temperament. We groan at the least touch; every movement becomes a shock, every scratch becomes a wound, and all opposition to our will becomes a cause of despair. The soul has

become a Sybarite ; it can no longer even support the wrinkle of a rose-leaf.

This sickly sensibility, made keener by pride, constitutes the character of Chatterton, as he has been represented on the stage, and it is for this reason that his suicide affects us so little. Chatterton does not kill himself as a desperate lover, or as a Stoic. He kills himself because his vanity has been wounded, and because, instead of honoring his genius, the lord mayor of London advises him to abandon making verses, and offers to make him his valet-de-chambre. This would perhaps show that the lord mayor was a fool, but is not a sufficient reason why Chatterton should commit suicide. Would it not, indeed, be holding our life very cheap, to place it at the mercy of every fool whom we may happen to meet? His suicide was caused by wounded pride. . . "Damned country! the abode of scorn, be forever accursed!" exclaimed he, after having read a journal which pretended that he was not the author of his poems, and the letter in which the lord mayor offers to take him into his service. (*Taking the vial of opium.*) "Oh my soul, I have sold you!—I redeem you with this." (*He drinks the opium.*) "Free from all! equal to all at present! Welcome first hour of repose that I have enjoyed! Last hour of my life, welcome dawn of an eternal day! Farewell humiliations, hatreds, sarcasms, uncertainties, anguishes, miseries, tortures of the soul, farewell! Oh, with happiness I bid you all farewell!"

Thus the calumny of a journal and the impertinence of a letter, are the motives of the suicide of Chatterton. When Cato killed himself, it was at least for more than that.

We are aware, that the ingenious author of Chatterton has attached to his hero a theory with regard to the duties which society is obliged to fulfill towards poets. It must, when it discovers genius, sustain it, encourage it, and free it from the cares and embarrassments of life: in short, genius ought to have its civil list. We would cordially consent, and our contribution would be ready, if we could only know by what sign to recognize it. Does it show itself by the display of a sensitive vanity? by a quickness to be discouraged? by the abortion of its hopes? by the esteem of itself and a contempt for others? Alas! according to this account, genius runs the streets; and very foolish would he be who would make himself debtor, when he could, by puffing his own de-

fects, become the creditor. We will attempt to describe the characteristics of genius; but it seems that genius has a mark too much forgotten in this age; a mark which characterized it formerly in an extraordinary manner. Patience and vitality are its essential elements. See Dante, Homer, Tasso, Milton,* and a host of others. They did not escape misfortune; they lived, nevertheless, because they had within them that strength which enabled them to bear the pains of life. God had not given them genius, as a light perfume escapes from a vial when it is shaken, but as a generous *viaticum* which sustains man during a long voyage. What! you have within you a divine and immortal thought, and cannot support the *ennuis* of life, the scorn of fools, the malignity of calumniators, the coldness of the indifferent! What! you walk with your head in the heavens, and you complain because an insect, concealed in the grass, stings your feet as you pass by!—Protect genius against its own infirmities and weaknesses, say some people.—But we distrust that genius which can only live in a hot-house; and we expect of this sickly plant, neither flowers which have perfume, nor fruit which have flavor. They say, that genius wants but two things: *Life and revery, bread and time*. Bread! God has said to man, that he should only eat of it by the sweat of his brow. Why should genius be dispensed from the law of labor, which is the law of God?—"My work," says the genius, "is to dream." Alas! Revery is not a profession, which society can recognize and reward. It is wrong, say some; it is to genius that we are indebted for poetry, and poetry must have its price in the world. Yes; but it does obtain the best price which man can pay to man; it obtains glory. And see what admirable justice in this distribution which man makes of glory to great poets! Until the day when poetry leaps forth, grand and beautiful, from the long reveries of the poet, no one knows whether the dream would be barren or fruitful, and if there would remain to the man who awoke, any thing of the enchantments of the man who had slept.

* "And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things, not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that is praiseworthy."—MILTON.

For if the dreamer, after he had awoke, were to relate to me his nonsense, why should I reward him? Why should I say to him: Dream on, dreamer of foolish dreams; while you are sleeping, I will work for you? No! To the uncertain work of revery, man is right in offering only the uncertain hope of glory. It is by means of the hope of glory that he supports his revery, not knowing what his dreams will bring forth. But the day when poetry bursts forth from the brain of the divine dreamer, then in addition to glory, man gives to genius, especially in our own times, honor and fortune; and often, what seems so extraordinary, at the time when it pleases God to take from genius some of its own strength and beauty; as if when man is anxious to add to the gifts which God has given him, God takes back his own, in order to avoid the mingling of the treasures of earth with the treasures of heaven.

We have examined the different vicissitudes of sentiment which man has of his own life. We have seen how ancient and modern literature expressed them, and what a remarkable difference there is between them. One inspiring the love of life, the other the love of death; one borrowing its images and its ideas from every thing which lives, from all that is embellished with the light and brilliancy of day; the other deriving its thoughts from the meditation of human destiny, and its emotions in the spectacle, and in contemplations, of death; one more simple, the other more subtle and refined; the one which represents the beautiful in the arts and the true in morals, the other which, in the arts, represents the exaggerated and the fantastic, and which in morals, represents materialism, disguised under the fine name of sensibility; in a word, one more wholesome and more moral than the other, because, in making us love life, it makes us love the duties which we are called upon to discharge; because it encourages man to be patient and firm; while the other, in inspiring us with a disgust for life, inspires us also with a disgust of our duties, and makes us love indolence in expecting nothing but annihilation.

VIII.

OF PATERNAL LOVE—THE OLD HORACE, DON DIEGO AND GERONTE
IN HORATIUS—THE CID AND THE LIAR OF CORNEILLE—TRIBOULET
IN THE LE ROI S'AMUSE, BY VICTOR HUGO.

WE do not wish to define paternal love. It is the merit of dramatic literature not to define sentiments, but to put them into action. We ought then, in our criticisms upon this literature, to distrust our capacity for analysis and definition ; we ought not to dissect that which is alive.

We will take paternal love as it has been represented in our ancient drama, especially in Corneille, and compare it with paternal love as it has been represented in the dramas and romances of our own times.

In Corneille, paternal love has an extraordinary character of firmness and grandeur. At the first glance, it would seem that Don Diego and the old Horace are wanting in tenderness. They have not, at least, that which passes among us for tenderness : we mean this weakness and this agitation which we call sensibility. But take these great souls at the moments when they are off their guard, at those moments when some unexpected event deprives them of the command which they have over themselves. Take the old Horace when his sons are going to the battle :

Ah ! [*says he,*] do not overcome my feelings !
My voice wants expression, and my heart boldness
To encourage you in your aspirations !
In this farewell I have only tears.
Do your duty, and leave the rest to the gods !

Act iii. scene 3.

Here tenderness is displayed in the manner in which a great soul should feel, which is troubled and acknowledges

its trouble. This old man who appeared severe and unmerciful, knows even how to console his daughter and his daughter-in-law, Camille and Sabine, and to console them as we console them, by partaking of their pains and sympathizing with them. Thus when in the despite of the Horatii and Curatii, Rome and Alba wished to seek other combatants :

I do not conceal it, [*says he,*] I have joined my vows to yours.
 If merciful Heaven had heard my voice,
 Alba would be compelled to make another choice.
 We will soon see the Horatii triumph,
 Without seeing their arms soiled with the blood of the Curatii ;
 And upon the event of a more human combat,
 Will now depend the honor of the Roman name.
 The wisdom of the gods orders it otherwise.

Act iii. scene 5.

Thus all Roman as he is, he would rather have preferred less glory and less danger for his sons, and he does not conceal from his daughters the sorrow which he feels. But the gods will it to be so, and the glory of Rome demands it. He is therefore resigned. Shall we say that on this account, the old Horace loves his country more than he loves his children ? No ; that only shows that the old Horace entertains for his country the same feelings which he does for his children. He loves his children with tenderness and sensibility, as we all love them ; but he loves his country with a devotion which determines him to do and suffer all for it.

In the old Horace, paternal love bursts forth, especially when it is in accordance with duty, and has nothing to constrain it. See this scene, where he knows at last that his son has caused Rome to triumph, and that he is conqueror and alive :

O, my son ! my joy ! the pride of our age !
 O, unexpected prop of a falling state !
 Courage worthy of Rome, and blood worthy of the Horatii !
 The bulwark of your country and the glory of your race !
 When will I be able to extinguish in your embraces,
 The error of which I had formed such false sentiments !
 When will my love enable me to bathe your victorious forehead
 With tears of ecstasy and joy !

Act iv. scene 2.

This old Roman, who at the departure of his son, accused himself of having tears in his eyes, now weeps without wish-

ing to conceal it ; he weeps, and his tears of joy affect us more than his tears of sorrow, because they lay open to us the depth of this paternal love, which, until then, was concealed from our eyes, with a kind of shrinking bashfulness.

Such is the old Horace, such are the fathers in Corneille ; they are true men, because they all have humane sentiments ; but ready at the same time to sacrifice these sentiments to things which are superior to the heart of man, and which constitute its law.

There is in the character of the old Horace, a trait which we would feel culpable to forget. It is the sentiment which he entertains of the power which belongs to him as the father of a family. This trait is altogether Roman. "*Jus autem potestatis*," says Gaius, copied by Justinian in his Institutes, "*proprium est civium Romanorum ; nulli enim alii sunt homines qui talem in liberos habeant potestatem, qualem nos habemus*." The Roman had the right of life and death over his children ; he could sell them, according to the law of the Twelve Tables. It mattered not if the son married and had children ; he did not the less belong to his father, with his wife and children. Even the Consulate did not free the sons from the bonds of paternal authority, and the political law yielded to the civil law. This sentiment of absolute power gave to paternal love among the Romans an extraordinary character of dignity. The father felt himself a magistrate. Thus in Corneille ; when the old Horace hears of the flight of his son, he does not hesitate to condemn him, and vows that he will punish him : "I call the Supreme Powers to witness, that before this is ended, these hands, my own hands, will wash out in blood the dishonor of the Romans." Do not expect of the father of a family invested with such power the weakness of paternal love, such as we know it. In Roman society, the father had an immovable belief in his authority, which he felt had emanated from nature, and confirmed by the laws and customs of his country. In modern society, on the other hand, the father sometimes seems to have doubts with regard to his power, and he endeavors to make up for authority by tenderness ; but tenderness does not create authority. It softens authority, it adorns obedience, it establishes between the father and his children a sympathy, which by degrees introduces the idea of equality, and which for this reason weakens the idea of paternal authority. The tender-

sacrificing his love for Chimene. We do not see how much Don Diego loves his son, until when, avenged by him, he can enjoy victory ; when he has no longer the dishonor of the insult or the fear of battle before his eyes. It is then that paternal tenderness bursts forth with such emphasis in Don Diego :

. . . . Do not mingle sighs with my joy,
 Permit me to take breath, in order that I may praise you.
 My valor has no room to disavow you ;
 You have well imitated it, and your heroic courage
 Causes to revive in you the heroes of my race.
 It is from them that you descend, it is from me that you come ;
 Your first attempt with the sword is equal to mine,
 And your youth, animated with glorious ardor
 By this great effort, equals my renown.
 Prop of my old age and consummation of my happiness,
 Touch these white locks of him whom you honor !
 Come and kiss this cheek, and recognize the place
 Where once was the insult which your courage effaced.
 Act iii. scene 5.

And do not believe that this son, this adored avenger, with difficulty saved from the perils of battle—do not believe that this Don Diego loves him afterwards with a weaker and more timorous love. No ; he loves the honor and renown of his son even more than the life of his son ; or rather, he believes in the invincible ascendant of his glory. Who then can conquer him after he has vanquished the Count ? We are aware that when his son, in despair of the anger of Chimene, tells him that he seeks death, Don Diego replies to him, that he must go to combat the Moors who have just disembarked :

There, if you wish to die, find a glorious death.
 Act iii. scene 6.

But we do not take these words as a triumph of love of country over paternal love ; nor do we take it farther for these terrible words of the first act : "*Die or kill.*" There honor prompts the father to consign to death or to vengeance without groaning ; there Don Diego does not believe that his son hastens to death ; he hastens to victory ; he has the presentiment and the confidence in it ; and if he still speaks to him of finding a glorious death, it is with that knowledge of the human heart, which the old man has acquired during his long life ; he knows that the best way of relieving the

human heart overcome by passion, is to excite in it another passion, and which can be more easily distracted than consoled. To him who wishes to die on account of love, offer the prospect of a great danger and an opportunity to die with glory, he will joyfully seize it, and then he will rather seek to conquer than to die. This is what the old Don Diego did ; and this is the reason why he left no repose to Rodrigo, and cast him in the midst of dangers with a kind of pride, which shows how much he loves his son and in what manner he loves him, in sending him to combat the Moors after the Count, Don Sancho after the Moors, and when the king upon the challenge accepted by Don Diego for his son, wishes to put off the combat until the morrow,

No, sire, [*says the old man,*] it must not be deferred ;
One is always ready, when one has courage.

Act iii. scene 5.

We have analyzed the character of the old Horace and Don Diego, in order to make it clearly understood how Corneille conceived of paternal love, and how he expressed it. Don Diego and the old Horace love their sons, but they love them with a firm and exalted love ; they experience the emotions of paternal love, but they place them in subjection to a feeling more elevated and more noble ; here honor, and there the love of country.

Do not believe that it is the grandeur of sentiments adapted to tragedy which has given to the fathers of Corneille this elevation and this firmness. In the Comedy of *The Liar*,* the paternal character preserves this firmness which is so near akin to tenderness. Geronte is an affectionate and an indulgent father. He believes the stories which his son tells him of a forced marriage which he has contracted at Poitiers ; he pardons him ; he is so much affected as to hope to see himself revived in his grandchildren. But this credulity, which springs from his tenderness and which exhibits it, does not lessen in him the grandeur of the paternal character. Geronte is not the imbecile father and dupe of the old Comedy. If he permits himself to be deceived for a moment, hear him when he learns that his son has lied. See what nobility in his anger ! with what a tone

* *Le Menteur*, by Corneille.

he attests the respect which his son owed to his white locks, which he has outraged by his lies ! The old Horace is not greater in his indignation against his son, whom he believes to be a coward, than Geronte in his anger against his son, who had become a liar ; and when Don Diego to avenge his injury, appeals to the honor of Rodrigo, he has not words more burning and more severe than Geronte when he reproaches Dorante for having forfeited his honor.

Geronte. Are you a gentleman ?

Dorante (aside). Ah ! unfortunate meeting !

(*aloud.*) Being descended from you, the matter is a little doubtful.

Ger. Do you believe that it suffices to be descended from me ?

Dor. With all France, I willingly believe it.

Ger. And do you not know, with all France,
Whence this title of honor has derived its origin,
And that virtue alone has placed in this high rank,
Those who have, with me, made it pass in my blood ?

Dor. I cannot be ignorant of what every body knows,
That virtue acquires it as blood gives it.

Ger. If, where blood fails, virtue acquires it,
So, where blood has given it, vice may lose it.
What springs from one source, perishes by the contrary.
All that one has done, the other can undo ;
And in the degradation in which I see you,
You are no longer a gentleman, although descended from me.

Dor. Me !

Act v. scene 3.

This blunt apostrophe, " Are you a gentleman ? " is equal to the words of Don Diego, " Rodrigo, have you a heart ? " It is the same appeal made to the sentiment of honor. And see how the old gentleman feels the dishonor of his son, and with what tone he reproaches him for it, often repeating the words which are the most cruel for a man of honor to hear, the words *coward* and *liar* ; so much so, that becoming irritated at these insulting expressions, and almost forgetting that it is his father who speaks to him, Dorante exclaims with anger, and, ready to reply to the insult : I am not a gentleman !—But this angry exclamation does not appease the old man, and he replies with the authority of an enraged father :

Permit me to speak, you whose imposture
Shamefully soils the gift of nature.

Act v. scene 3.

Very soon, however, after these first outbreaks of outraged honor, Geronte resumes the tone of an affectionate and indulgent father, so much the more afflicted by the deceptions of his son, as he had treated him with more kindness. Had he not pardoned him his pretended clandestine marriage? And it is by a lie that he returned his kindness! Thus, always in Geronte, as in Don Diego, and in the old Horace, paternal love exhibited itself mingled with tenderness and firmness, with strength and weakness, such as it really is. But in this mixture, Corneille always took care to keep the weak sentiment in subjection to the strong, tenderness in subjection to duty; and the moral law remains superior to man, whose impulses it restrains, without extinguishing them. There are between Geronte and Don Diego, or the old Horace, differences which distinguish comic personages from tragic ones; but the basis of their sentiments and ideas is the same in both.

We will now examine if paternal love has preserved on the stage this character of dignity, and if fathers, in the modern drama, are still what Corneille made them.

If we are not deceived, the part of paternal love on the stage has degenerated; and it has degenerated, as in literature, ideas and sentiments degenerate, by exaggeration. When the sentiments become weak in society, they become exaggerated by way of set-off in literature. Instead of representing paternal love mingled with tenderness and firmness, as Corneille has made it, they have represented it, violent, ardent, excited, and even jealous; they have attributed to it some of the virtues or some of the faults of another kind of love.

There is, for example, in paternal love, as in all kinds of love, something egotistic, which it is excusable to show; instead of which they have exaggerated it, by placing it in bold relief. In Don Diego, and in the old Horace, there is something of this paternal egotism, but it is confounded in their soul with another sentiment, less contracted and less personal; with family pride. This haughtiness of the race purifies and transforms egotism; it takes from it what would, otherwise, make this sentiment seem mean and contemptible. When the old Horace believes that his son has, by flight, soiled the glory of his family, what ardent and sublime anger is exhibited!

Mourn over the dishonor of all our race,
And the eternal disgrace which is placed on
The name of the Horatii !

Act iii. scene 6.

These are the sentiments of a father, who, feeling that he lives again in his children, as his ancestors are revived in him, knows that he and all his family will be disgraced by the dishonor of his son ! When Don Diego sees Rodrigo again, who has just avenged the honor of his house, his joy is expressed by the same sentiment as the anger of the old Horace.

. . . . Yes, your illustrious valor
Causes the heroes of my race to revive in you.
It is from them that you are descended, it is from me
That you come !

Act iii. scene 6.

It is in this manner, in families which have permanency, as the Roman and feudal families, that paternal egotism appears elevated and ennobled by the pride of family.

In societies, on the other hand, where the inconstancy of public institutions strikes at the family itself, and loosens its ties, paternal egotism does not lose its rights. Instead of attaching itself to a long succession of ancestors, as this egotism can only be allowed to one's self individually, it takes another character and expression ; it is more jealous, more suspicious and contracted. It no longer proceeds from some superior idea, as that of family dignity ; it arises, if we may so speak, from the instinctive joy which the father experiences in having a child. In the fathers of Corneille, we have a glimpse of this paternal egotism ; but this egotism becomes elevated, and very soon disappears in the dignity of their sentiments of honor and hereditary pride. In our days, paternal egotism can scarcely any longer be elevated by leaning upon such sentiments. The customs and institutions of society refuse such aid, even should he desire to have it. It is also, if we may so speak, collected and concentrated in itself by taste and by necessity ; it is elevated by its own strength, and endeavors on the stage to interest us alone, and without the aid of any idea or any affection which are superior to it. It is this new character of a father, introduced in our days on the stage, which we propose to examine in the character of Triboulet, by Victor Hugo.

"Triboulet," says the author, in the preface of the drama entitled *Le Roi S'amuse*, "is deformed, Triboulet is ill, Triboulet is the buffoon of the court; a threefold misery which makes him bad. He hates the king because he is king, the lords because they are lords, men because they have not all of them humps on their backs. . . . He depraves the king and corrupts him; he urges him on to tyranny, ignorance, and vice; he lets him go to all the families of the gentlemen, pointing out with his finger the wife to seduce, the sister to ravish, the daughter to dishonor."

But this 'Triboulet, ugly and deformed, has a daughter. This daughter is his only love, his only joy, and his only virtue. The more he hates the world, the more he loves his daughter. The author wished, as he said in the preface of *Lucrece Borgia*, to show, in Triboulet, how paternal love sanctifies physical deformity, and, in Lucrece Borgia, how maternal love purifies moral deformity. It is, then, curious to observe how Victor Hugo has described paternal love in Triboulet, since he wished to make him the type of this love.

We take pleasure in saying, in beginning these remarks, that no writer in our day has painted with more beauty than Victor Hugo the joy which the child creates in a family, and the love which it inspires. See these charming lines in *The Leaves of Autumn* :

The infant, with his sweet smile, is so beautiful;
His charming frankness, his voice which wishes to say every thing,
Its tears quickly dried,
Permitting his astonished and delighted eyes to wander,
Offering his young soul to life every where,
And his mouth to kisses!

Lord, preserve to me, preserve those whom I love,
Brothers, relations, friends, and even my enemies,
Triumphing in evil;
May I never see, Lord, the summer without vermeil flowers,
The cage without birds, the hive without bees,
The house without children!

Feuilles d'Automne, xix.

Paternal love breathes in these verses, but paternal love which has more sweetness than grandeur; in the joy which this charming smile gives, this look at once full of naivete and seriousness, and this air of frank good-nature, which con-

stitute the charms of infancy ; paternal love, in its first and most natural enjoyment, when the child is as yet only a subject of pleasure and not a subject of reflection. But is it thus that we love a son, when this word has acquired, in the course of years, a graver and more serious signification ? Is the love of children altogether paternal love, or is it not the first and sweetest part of it ? When the child, becoming advanced, begins to have passions and desires which distinguish and separate him from us ; when we feel that we have to do with one who is no longer a part of ourselves, although he is still united to us by strong and intimate ties ; then paternal love ought to assume another character and expression ; then, in devoting himself for his son, the father does truly an act of virtue rather than of instinct ; then, also, on the other hand, when the father wishes that the son should live only for him, and should love only him, his paternal egotism becomes more apparent and offensive.

Let us now come to Triboulet, and see how he loves his daughter. Does he love her as a child, or as his daughter ? Does he love her for himself or for herself ?

My daughter ! Sole happiness which heaven has given me !
 Others have parents, brothers, friends, a wife, a husband, a train
 Of ancestors and allies, and many children !
 But me ! I have only you ! Another is rich ! Well !
 You are my only treasure and my only good !
 Others believe in God, I believe only in your soul ;
 Others have youth and woman's love,
 They have pride, magnificence, grace, and health,
 They are beautiful ; I, you see, have only your beauty.
 Dear child ! my city, my country, my family,
 My wife, my mother, my sister, and my daughter,
 My happiness, my riches, my worship, and my law !
 My (universe) all, it is you, always you, and only you !
 On every other side my poor soul is bruised.
 Oh ! If I lost you ! . . . No, it is a thought,
 Which I cannot for a moment bear.

Act ii. scene 3.

We do not know, but it seems to us that this ardor of passion does not express paternal love ; it belongs to another kind of love. Triboulet loves his daughter as we love a woman ; he loves her with an egotistic and jealous passion ; he loves her for himself, and not for herself. It is not in this

way that fathers love. They love with less ardor, if we take the word love in its most passionate sense, but they love with a purer love. Victor Hugo has wished, as to the rest, that we should be deceived with regard to the love for his daughter which he has attributed to Triboulet; an egotistic and personal love, which relates entirely to himself.

Triboulet (to Blanche). . . . You are in want of nothing. Say? Are you comfortable? Blanche, embrace me!

Blanche. How good you are, my father!

Triboulet. No. I love you:

That is all. Are you not my life and my very blood?

Act iii. scene 3.

The replies of Blanche are charming and natural. The child takes kindly the love of his father as proceeding from goodness, because he feels himself distinct from her father, and understands that man is good when he loves another than himself. But Triboulet, who feels that he loves his daughter as part of himself, is not good. He is amorous; and that is a very different thing.

We do not desire to blame the effusions of paternal love! We believe that nothing is better calculated to move the heart, and that nothing is better adapted to poetry. Homer has not feared to show us Hector, armed for the battle and ready to go, taking his son in his arms; and when the child, frightened by the brightness of the armor of his father, and the waving of the horse-hair which floats from his helmet, throws himself crying into the arms of his nurse, Hector smiles, and taking off his helmet, places it on the ground. Then embracing his son, and raising him in his arms: "Jupiter, and all you immortal gods, cause this child to be honored by the Trojans, as I am to-day, and may he be brave in battle and powerful among his people;—in seeing him return from the battle, covered with bleeding spoils after having killed some illustrious enemy, may the people say of him—'He is still braver than his father, and this voice of the multitude will rejoice the heart of his mother.'"^{*}

^{*} Iliad, b. vi., ver. 476.

Virgil has imitated these verses; but they are much below his model. Æneas, before going to battle, also embraces his son:

Postquam habilis lateri clypeus lorica que tergo est,
Ascanium fuis circum complectitur armis,

This is a true and touching effusion of paternal love. Hector unites to the idea of his glory, the glory of his son, which he desires may be greater than his own; he mingles self-love with devotedness. This is paternal love in its most perfect state.*

The paternal tenderness of Triboulet, on the contrary, is entirely personal and egotistical. See, when the courtiers have seized his daughter to carry her to the King, see what predominates in his anger. He demands his daughter with a kind of madness, but with the madness of a man from whom they have robbed his property; with the fury of a miser who demands his strong-box, or rather that of a mother from whom the Gipsies have taken her child. But he does not even seem to think of the dangers to which the virtue of Blanche is exposed; he thinks of himself, rather than of the misfortunes of his daughter.

My lords! I must have my daughter!
Go and bring her to me immediately!
O, see this hand which has nothing illustrious,
The hand of a man of the people, of a serf and a rustic,
This hand which appeared disarmed to the laughers,
And which has no sword, has yet nails, Sirs!"

Act iii. scene 3.

Certainly, we would not wish that Triboulet should be calm and resigned in this terrible moment. We do not censure either his grief, or his anger. But in art, all the passions have a limit which must be preserved. Grief must not be pushed to convulsions, nor anger to fury; because, having reached this excess, they cease to be sentiments, they become instincts, and have their violence and brutality; they have

*Summa que per galeam delibans oscula, fatur:
Disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem,
Fortunam ex aliis. Nunc te mea dextra bello
Defensum dabit, et magna inter præmia ducet.
Tu facito, mox cum matura adoleverit ætas,
Sis memor; et te animo repetentem exempla tuorum,
Et pater Æneas, et avunculus excitet Hector.*

[ÆNIAD, b. xii.

* Ulysses, in his descent to Hades, relates to Achilles the valor and the glory of his son Pyrrhus; and Achilles, who regrets life and who would rather prefer to be the slave of a poor laborer than to command the dead, Achilles, notwithstanding his sadness, experiences an emotion of joy, "and retires, happy to know that his son is an illustrious warrior."

especially their blindness and giddiness: we mean to say, that man in this condition has no longer even the idea of what causes his grief, his fear, or his anger; he is struck dumb and stupefied by the effect of his passion. Such is Triboulet in his grief and in his anger; he is blind. He ought only to think of the dishonor of his daughter, he ought to mourn over her injured virtue; instead of which, he insults the lords of the court. He is more irritated than afflicted; more abusive than sad. That is not all. When his daughter rushes out of the chamber of the king, distracted, bewildered, and in disorder, the first impulse of Triboulet is the joy of finding her again, a joy altogether instinctive; and in order to think of the misfortune of his daughter, this expression of Blanche is necessary:

. Miserable that we are!
Shame.

Act iii. scene 3.

If Triboulet could have believed for a moment that his daughter had perished, we might understand that in seeing her again, that his first exclamation would have been a cry of joy; but he knows that she is in the chamber of the king. How then is his first thought, in finding her pale and distracted, not a thought full of grief and shame?

This law of instinct, all material as it is, is so much the law of all the dramatic characters of Victor Hugo, that when Blanche confesses to her father that she loves the king, it is still by instinct that she explains her love; and this answer satisfies her father.

Triboulet. And you love him?

Blanche. Always!

Trib. I have nevertheless given abundant time to remedy this foolish love!

Bla. I love him.

Trib. O, poor heart of woman!—But explain your reasons for loving him.

Bla. I do not know!

Trib. It is singular!

It is strange!

I pardon you, child!

Act iv. scene 1.

Triboulet, however, does not abandon his revenge on that account. The very love which his daughter has for Francis

the First renders him more culpable in the eyes of Triboulet ; he hates him the more for it.

It shall not be said of the base seducer,
That he hath destroyed my happiness with impunity.

Act iv. scene 1.

These verses are singular, and correspond with the character which the author has given to Triboulet. Thus it is not the dishonor of his daughter that he wishes to avenge ; it is especially the insult offered to himself. The king has taken from him a portion of the heart of his daughter ; she is no longer entirely his own. This is the reason why the king shall perish, less for having dishonored the virtue of Blanche than for having taken away from Triboulet this egotistic and jealous happiness which he enjoyed alone.

In creating Triboulet, Victor Hugo has not, in my opinion, represented the father, he has represented only one side of it, and that the least beautiful. Triboulet is not the model of paternal love, and it has only one of the elements of this love, the element the most passionate, perhaps, but the least favorable, that of egotism. This manner of drawing a character, by painting only one side of it, by exhibiting it in profile and not full-face, is adapted to produce effect, but it is dangerous and false ; it gives a great relief to art, but takes away from its extension ; and restricts it, since, instead of representing humanity entire, it represents only one feature of it ; it substitutes the caricature for the portrait—for caricature is only the putting in relief of a particular feature of a countenance at the expense of the whole face. This kind of painting and invention, which prefers effect to truth, is very common in our days.

Formerly, a dramatic character was an embodiment of qualities and faults, which on the one part struggled against each other, and on the other side were submitted to some superior law of religion, honor, or patriotism. In this struggle consisted the interest of the character represented on the stage ; and this superior law which it endeavored to fulfil, constituted the morality of his character. According to the incidents of the play, each passion in its turn seemed to prevail, none of them being represented as irresistible ; and the moral law which controlled the drama did not extinguish it, being visibly suspended, during the whole piece, over the heads of the personages, but fulfilled itself only at the

denouement. Nowadays, characters are composed otherwise. Instead of representing the *ensemble* of a character, and the struggle between its good and bad passions, they select one of those passions, which they make violent, irresistible, and fatal, and which becomes the absolute mistress of all the others; that is to say, they take a feature of the human heart for the human heart entire. At the same time the moral law, which, in the ancient drama, also sustained a struggle with the passions; this law which they themselves, who transgressed it, acknowledged so well, that it always had a place in the piece, either from hope or remorse, disappeared also before the ascendant of the master passion. There was no longer any counterpoise of any kind, either on the side of the rival passions or on the side of duty. What then remains to struggle against the passions? The hazard of events. And it is for this reason that, in the modern drama, the interest resides rather in the strange complication of events than in the shock of opposing passions. The poet has no longer the force of chance—that is to say, a force sovereignly capricious and changeable, which can rival the passion which he is pleased to represent. Hence, also, in the modern drama, we perceive something arbitrary and fantastic. The incidents and stage tricks are increased; but these incidents do not arise, as in the ancient drama, from the natural working of the passions represented on the stage; they have no longer their source in the character of the personages; they are born from the fancy of the poet, who, feeling the want of arousing the spectators from time to time, knits his action in an odd manner, and aims particularly at creating surprise.

Paternal egotism, substituted for love, a detail and a particular feature taking the place of the *ensemble* of the paternal character, and the preponderance of this particular passion over all the others, and especially over the moral law, are the first metamorphoses, or rather, such is the alteration which the character has undergone from the times of Corneille to our own days.

IX.

PATERNAL SELFISHNESS IN THE *PARIA* OF DELAVIGNE, AND IN THE PIECE OF COLLE ENTITLED *DUPUIS* AND *DESRONAIS*.

VICTOR HUGO is not the first who has endeavored to represent paternal selfishness. In *Paria*, Delavigne has made of this selfishness one of the subjects of his drama. Before Delavigne, Collé has also made of this sentiment the subject of a piece entitled *Dupuis and Desronais*. He did not himself invent this character of a selfish father: he found it in a romancer of the seventeenth century, now unknown, named Challes, the author of the *Illustrious Frenchmen*, a collection of novels which are particularly remarkable for the acuteness and truthfulness of their moral observations.

Let us briefly notice in these authors, very different in time and talent, the different shades of paternal selfishness, and let us see, first, in what manner Delavigne has represented it in his tragedy of *Paria*.

A young paria, named Idamore, has quitted his father and his native land, and has gone to Benares. He has become a soldier, and, by his exploits against the Portuguese, who attacked India, he has become the chief of a tribe of warriors. They are ignorant of his birth and his origin. He loves Neala, the daughter of the chief of the Brahmins, and is about to marry her. It is at this moment that the old paria, Zares, the father of Idamore, arrives. He has left his solitary abode in order to find his son, who was his only joy and his only happiness upon earth. He finds him, he embraces him, he relates to him, in beautiful verses, how much he has suffered when he was abandoned by him:

I walked, I ran, I cried, O my son !

My son ! Echo alone responded to my cries.

I returned home towards evening, saying to myself on the way :

Near the paternal roof my son doubtless awaits me.

No person on the threshold, no footstep, no noise ;
I found myself solitary and alone with the night.
How his star with regret seems to measure the hours !
How much my abode enhances my solitude !
My eyes, flowing with tears, were hopelessly fixed
Upon that empty place where you ought to sit.
I charged with your death, the tiger, the reptile,
Our rocks, whose sides ought to afford you a shelter,
These trees of the valley, my guests, my friends,
Mute witnesses of the crime which they permitted ;
Every thing, the entire universe, mankind, and myself,
Before accusing you, O my supreme good,
You, the only support of an aged father,
You, whom I have nourished, you, my son,
You, my own flesh and blood.

Act iii. scene 4.

In those races which have been unjustly condemned by society, the domestic affections must be so much the more strong and enduring, as they take the place of all the other sources of enjoyment. This is the reason why Zares cannot bear the idea of again losing this son, who has, with so much difficulty, been restored to him. And, notwithstanding the marriage of Idamore with Neala, will carry him away with him, Idamore enters into the caste of the Brahmins ; he will no longer be a paria, he will no longer be his son. It is in vain that Idamore offers to his father to share his honors. No, replies the old paria,

My honors are my cares for you ; my only treasure
Is you ; it is the happiness of continually conversing with you ;
To repose upon your bosom at night,
And to wake up to see you again.
What do you offer me ? Days passed in constraint,
In groaning, in expecting you, in seeing you with fear,
When glory or love would, from pity,
Abandon you, for an hour, to my sad friendship.
I love you to excess ; be entirely mine.

Act iii. scene 4.

And, as Idamore, full of love for Neala, hesitates to leave her to follow her father, Zares, in despair, exclaims, in taking up his travelling cane :

Solitary and faithful prop which remains to your old master,
Come, be you at least my guide, since he is not willing.
O forests of Oraxa, whose sacred groves, pleasant fields,

And humble roof, which he swore never more to quit,
Neighboring sea, where my arms taught his courage
To sport among the waves breaking upon thy shore,
Here I am ; receive an unfortunate father :
I return to die alone among the fields where I was born.

Act iii. scene 4.

This paternal selfishness has something natural and touching, especially in an unfortunate man ; and yet we think that this selfishness is revolting to the spectator. Why did Zares not accept the brilliant lot which his son offered him ? Why did he obstinately wish to carry him to his retreat, and force him to sacrifice his love ? Paternal affection has been created by God, not to receive, but to give ; not to require sacrifices, but to make them. Moreover, we believe that the poet has forgotten to give to Zares the only sentiment which can enable us to conceive his repugnance to share the honors of his son—religious fanaticism. The Jew of the middle ages, proscribed by the Christians, proscribed them in his turn ; he hated them, not only as a people of oppressors, but as an infidel race ; he preferred rather to see his son perish, than to see him a Christian. Such ought the parias to be, with regard to the Brahmins ; they must have hatred for hatred, fanaticism for fanaticism ; they ought to curse them from the depth of their misery, as the latter curse them from the haughtiness of their pride. Thus, when the old paria sees his son about to enter, by his marriage, into the ranks of this proud caste, why did he not reclaim his son only in the name of his paternal love ? Ah ! If it was in the name of religion, in the name of this legitimate hatred against the tyranny of the Brahmins, or in the name of God, that Zares reclaimed his son, then we would be no longer astonished at his obstinacy, for we know that it is the property of enthusiasm, or fanaticism, to extinguish the sentiments of nature ; we could shed tears over the unhappy love of Idamore and Neala ; but we would conceive that Zares wished to make Neala abandon this love, which seemed to him to be an impiety. This would be an eternal struggle between duty and passion, between heaven and earth ; this would be the old Lusignan entreating his daughter to return to Christianity and to separate herself from Orasmenes. But the selfishness of Zares cannot, of itself, serve as a counterpoise to the love of Idamore for Neala ; religion, as in *Zaire*, or honor, as in

the *Cid*, can alone counterbalance the influence of love. On the stage, paternal selfishness ought, in our opinion, to be represented with much reserve, rather as a defect which appears, notwithstanding our efforts to conceal it, than as a legitimate sentiment which has a right to show itself; and this rule should be observed, more especially, in comedy, where the characters are not proposed as examples, than in tragedy, where the characters seek to interest us.

It is in this manner that Collé has represented it to us in the piece entitled *Dupuis and Desronais*. His selfish father seems to be ashamed of his fault; he dissembles it as much as he can, and the efforts which he makes to conquer or conceal his passion, because after all this passion is next to a good quality. The spectator at the same time excuses and censures this father, who loves his daughter so much that he does not wish to have a son-in-law, that is to say, any one whom his daughter will love as much as or more than himself. The mixture of hatred and interest which suit this character makes of this piece a particular kind of comedy which Collé in his *Mémoires* endeavors to define by saying, that it does not resemble the pieces of La Chaussée, which are dramas; nor those of Marivaux, although they resemble them very much; nor the pieces of Regnard and Du Fresny; and he modestly concluded that this kind of comedy is entirely new and original. Collé in thus speaking forgot the *Misanthrope*; for the misanthrope is also a character which the poet wished us to love and censure at the same time. Only in the *Misanthrope*, the comic tone is always dominant, and in that lies the great art of Molière; while in *Dupuis and Desronais*, the dramatic tone appears every where, although Collé detested the drama.

Before examining the piece of Collé, let us say a word concerning the author.

Collé ought to have his place in the history of the literature of the eighteenth century. He does not belong to the school of the Encyclopædists, for he often ridicules them; he has nevertheless the ideas of the eighteenth century, and yields more than he is aware to the influence of the men whom he censures. It is even in this respect that Collé faithfully represents one side of the society of the eighteenth century. Whatever, indeed, at this epoch, was the ascendant of the philosophers, there was a considerable portion of society

which had a repugnance for this school, still more for its men than their ideas. Thus attached to the grand philosophic school of the eighteenth century was a numerous school of writers, who without being the adversaries of the Encyclopedist party, censured its insolent pretensions and its religious intolerance; who loved liberty, but the reserved discreet liberty of private life, and not political liberty, with its rage for governing the world; not devotees, but on the contrary, they were a little skeptical, and censured severely pedantic or fanatical incredulity; men who attached themselves to the opposition; but only in songs, and never went so far as to publish pamphlets. In other respects they were good citizens, and accommodated themselves very well to the social hierarchy in which they were neither the first nor the last; employing themselves willingly in diverting princes, and endeavoring to enrich themselves with their assistance or at their expense, without renouncing the privilege of abusing them behind their backs.

Such was this school, which attached itself at a respectable distance to Montesquieu himself, who always knew how to keep himself apart from the sect of Encyclopædists, although he had written the *Persian Letters*; and to Duclos, who although a philosopher, censured the declamatory temerity of the apostles of impiety; a school which has for its principal representatives Lesage, the first among those free-talkers who did not wish to be freethinkers, Marivaux, Piron, Crebillon the younger, Panard and Collé; and who in our opinion faithfully represented the mind and character of what may be called the middle class of the society of the eighteenth century. In this class were united, as it often happens, contradictory opinions, which were tempered the one by the other: a little philosophy and a little religion; a little love of liberty and a little anxiety to be employed in the service of princes; a little impudence and a little complaisance. The Memoirs of Collé, entitled a *Historical Journal*, afford a singular evidence of this curious mixture of opposite opinions, which compose, we may say with propriety, the true wisdom of the public.

Collé at first wrote songs, burlesque scenes, and pieces of verse in pure bombast. But these songs and burlesques were not intended for the public; they were only written to amuse the society which Collé frequented. This society was

at first composed entirely of tradespeople, but of that portion of them who were allied to the nobility in matters of finance. It was in this way that Collé was afterwards enabled to enter into the society of the Count of Clermont and the Duke of Orleans, the grandfather of the present king,* all of whom loved comedy and enacted it. Collé made vaudevilles for the *fêtes* which these princes gave ; for we must remark that in this age, which was captivated with literature, *fêtes* and amusements were nearly all literary at some point. Collé had some of his proverbs played at the theatre of the Duke of Orleans, which were not well adapted to the broad daylight of public representation. It was also at this theatre that *The Hunting party of Henry the Fourth* was represented, Collé's best piece, and the only one, with *Dupuis and Desroisais*, which made him a literary man ; but for that he would have been nothing more than a witty balladmonger of society.

Introduced by his ballads and burlesques into the society of princes, Collé endeavored to avail himself of their credit to make his fortune, and he obtained an interest in the *fermes generales* ; but he did not accomplish this object without difficulties and vexations, which in fact made his solicitations a more diverting comedy than all his pieces and ballads. What makes his history so amusing is, that he wishes at the same time to preserve his dignity as a literary man and to keep his place ; this makes of him, a Brutus acting the part of a beggar, the most laughable and the most amusing in the world ; and as he wrote down every day what he thought, we follow in his *Journal* the amusing vicissitudes of his pride and his ambition. One day he is in a disdainful humor, speaking contemptuously of authors who permit themselves to be treated with indifference by great lords : "It is their fault," said he bitterly ; "we only tread on reptiles which crawl." Some days after he relates with complaisance that the Count of Clermont had invited him to dine with him, and overwhelmed him with civilities ; the Count of Clermont wished to consult him about a piece of his composition. Then as Collé is sincere and candid, he begins again to remark that there is a little vanity in his recital ; he avows it, but soon after he qualifies this acknowledgment by this philosophical reflection ; that "the idea

* Louis Philippe, now dethroned.

which he always had that all men were equal, should remove the reproach of vanity to which he may have laid himself open, and that indeed he did not find the caresses of a prince of the blood as flattering to his self-love as we might imagine." In short, as if there were not enough of those natural contradictions in the heart of man, he adds in a note: "What the pretended modern philosophers have written upon the equality of man and of conditions has made me change my opinions upon this matter. Their vain and proud treatises upon this subject, instead of confirming me in my first opinion, have caused me to alter it. I now think, for reasons which it would be too long for me to detail, that the inequality of conditions is useful and necessary to men who live in society; but I always think and more than ever for his happiness, he must live with his equals, he must shun the great and avoid people of quality: this is the course which I have pursued myself."*

Such is Collé, or rather, such are we all. We love equality and we love distinctions; we act like philosophers by saying little of the pleasure which we experience in being caressed by princes of the blood, but we enjoy it the more, the less we speak of it; then at last, when age and experience come to show us that the inequality of conditions is useful to man, happy are those who, after having been at one time friendly to the people, and at other times, disposed to court the favor of the great, end like Collé, by becoming simply good citizens: that is to say, at once independent and respectful.

Nothing, nowadays, can give us any idea of the importance which the Theatre enjoyed in the eighteenth century. It was more than a place of amusement, it was a kind of public institution. It was there that the passions were exercised, not only on the stage, but in the playrooms. It was there that they got up parties for and against the actors and authors; it was the constant subject of their tracts and pamphlets. The Memoirs of Collé only speak of the Theatre; scarcely do they even mention, even casually, the political events of the reign of Louis XV. They enacted comedy in

* Note written in 1780.—He says elsewhere and with more justice: "That we ought to see the great and not associate with them. We ought to study them attentively for our own improvement, and in other respects make use of them for the increasing of our own fortunes."

society, and all the great world was a little author and actor. The Count of Clermont wrote comedies which Collé corrected; the Duke of Orleans played a part in the pieces of Collé, in the Theatre of Bagnolet; people of quality and financiers, played in their saloons; and as in these theatrical salons, it was more difficult to have actresses than actors, because the mistress of the house having a right to play the first character, her friends were not disposed to become her confidants, we see that the women's parts were performed by chambermaids and seamstresses of the ladies of quality, which explains and justifies the familiarity which exists between the waitingmaids and their mistresses in *Marivaux*. In short, what shows the influence which the Theatre had at this epoch, and how far it extended into the usages and even the laws of the people in 1765, these exhibitions at the Court were scarcely interrupted during the illness which carried off the Dauphin, which makes Collé say with a severity almost worthy of history: "The Dauphin died on Friday, the 20th of December, 1795. This cruel exhibition was the last of those which Marshal Richelieu gave at Fontainebleau."*

We might well be astonished that the author of the *Libertine Proverbs*, which they played at the theatres of princes, should have thought proper to have taken *Dupuis and Desronais* for the subject of his play. The profound analysis of paternal selfishness, this somewhat gloomy painting of one of the sentiments of the human heart, seems scarcely to harmonize with the fancy and gayety of a ballad-maker. But Collé had read the ancient novelettes, and in his *Proverbs*, he often borrows from the ancient ballads, their native freedom of manners; he only converted their simplicity into indecency, in order to please the good company which he frequented. It is in readings of this sort that he will find the novels of De Challes, his *Illustrious Frenchmen*, and among these novels, *Dupuis and Desronais*, or the selfish father.

* We will add, for the purpose of showing the inconstancy of the human heart, that in 1768, when the Queen died, the same Collé said in his journal: "Saturday, eve of Pentecost, the Queen received extreme-unction: prayers continued forty hours, while the exhibitions were interrupted. If our poor Queen does not languish and die, we will be compelled to stop the exhibitions for twenty-eight hours from the time of her death."

The novel of De Challes touches one of the most delicate points of the organization of a family. During eighteen years, a daughter has been educated under the eyes of her father and mother. She only loves those whom they love, and they only love whom she loves. She has reached a marriageable age ; they marry her, and then comes into the family to enlarge its circle, or rather to break it, a man who immediately takes away from the father and mother the better and dearest half of the affections of their beloved daughter. He does the same with the property. This is what is called establishing one's children in the world. We well know that such is the common law, and that one comes with a bad grace, not only to complain of it, but even to be astonished at it. Nevertheless, this law is hard and is not complied with without some murmurs, which we have heard when we give ear to the secret movements of the human heart. *

The character of Dupuis in the novel of Challes, represents those little jealousies and secret murmurings of fathers and mothers. Dupuis is at once the mother who is afraid of being less loved, and the father who is afraid of being less master of his fortune. He cannot bear the idea of having a son-in-law, that is to say, a man to whom he will give both his daughter and his property without even getting his thanks. Challes has drawn this character with remarkable tact and fidelity, and above all, he has the merit of rendering him neither odious nor tiresome. Dupuis is not tiresome, because he is not one of those characters, too common in comedy, who make their confession in some soliloquy, but who do not know how to put their passion into action. Challes is not satisfied with only defining the character of Dupuis ; he makes him act. Dupuis is selfish with so much refinement and delicacy, that neither his daughter nor Desronais, who wishes to be his son-in-law, can find any fault with him, nor are they able to reproach him with being selfish ; for this selfishness has always a good reason in its defence, and the reader admires in spite of himself, the resources of this very passion

* Can any thing be more tyrannical than this custom, to which fathers are subjected ? Can any thing be more impertinent and ridiculous than to acquire property by hard labor, and to educate a daughter with much care and tenderness, to be robbed of both by the hands of a man who is in no manner related to you ?—MOLIERE—*L'Amour Medecin*.

which offends him. Dupuis, then, is not tiresome ; nor is he odious, because at bottom we feel that he loves his daughter, and that he also loves Desronais. His fault does not destroy his good qualities, and this mixture of good and evil prevents Dupuis from being offensive to us, although he provokes us ; and he amuses us, although he acts contrary to our wishes. We feel towards him as Desronais himself, who sells himself, and nevertheless loves Desronais, and who could not even blame him as much as he could wish ; "for this devil of a man," says he somewhere, "manages in such a manner as always to seem to be right, and drives me to despair, without giving me the power of becoming angry."

We will notice some of the scenes invented by Challes to show this character of Dupuis.

Dupuis knows that his daughter loves Desronais, and that she is loved by him ; he sees that before long the two lovers will urge him to permit them to marry, and how can he resist ? The marriage is suitable on both sides. Dupuis, nevertheless, wishes to postpone, if not to prevent it ; and with that view, as he has made no engagement with Desronais, while the latter is on a travel to Angoulême, he promises his daughter to M. Dupont, a son of one of his old friends. Desronais, on his return, learns this scheme, and comes in despair to demand of Dupuis the hand of his daughter, offering him to marry her without any dower, without property, telling him that he loves her, and that he is loved by her. On hearing this, Dupuis, feigning astonishment, pretends that he has pledged his word to a son of one of his old friends : "I do not pretend, however," says he, "to control my daughter, and I leave her to the liberty of choosing for herself. If she prefers you, I will no longer think of Dupont, who is a rich match ; but I will not unite you so soon." On the following day, at the moment that Dupuis was speaking with M. Dupont about the articles of the marriage contract, Desronais, to whom he took good care to give notice of it, arrives and reclaims the promise which Dupuis had made to him the day before, to permit his daughter to choose for herself. "Miss Dupuis blushed," says Desronais, who relates the story himself, "but did not hesitate, and throwing herself at the knees of her father, she made him understand that she preferred myself in every way that a discreet, honorable, spiritual, and passionate young girl could

do. The father of Dupont, very much astonished, behaved himself like a gallant man, approved our demand, and forbade his son to think of this alliance. Dupuis, pretending to be at a loss to know how to extricate himself from this awkward predicament, feigned to be more angry than he really was, and said to his daughter, that all that he could do was to let her do as she pleased."

This is a well-managed scene; for Dupuis plays the part of an indulgent and prudent father, who does not wish to constrain his daughter, and who breaks with him whom he seemed to choose for a son-in-law, without the latter being able to complain, since it is the daughter who refuses him. Nor can Desronais any longer desire it, since he has consented to withdraw his word in his favor; and if he delays for some time to give his daughter, Desronais is compelled to excuse this delay; there must be some interval between a rupture and a new marriage. In this manner, Dupuis, in the novel of Challes, is selfish at his ease, and almost with honor, without any one being able to censure him.

The success of Challes consists in knowing how to make Dupuis confess to Desronais himself this singular dread which he had of having a son-in-law; and this without either Desronais or the reader being shocked at it. Selfish fathers cannot conceal the passion which they feel; but do not dare either to avow or to justify it; they do not dare to call it by its true name; they say that they love their daughter, but will not acknowledge that they love her for themselves, rather than for herself. Dupuis is more bold; he acknowledges his fault and justifies it: "Very soon," said Desronais, "Dupuis gave me a proof of his attachment for me, which I did not expect. I had obtained from the Court the office which was bestowed upon me; but I was compelled to defray the expenses of it, and I had only two-thirds of the money that was required. The delay which was granted me had expired. I did not know how M. Dupuis was informed of my situation. Without saying a word to me about it, he borrowed the amount, pawned a part of his silver, and remitted to me through the hands of his daughter, twelve thousand livres. This act of generosity touched me; I was going to return my thanks to him; he did not wish to hear me; I insisted upon it. 'Eh! morbleu,' says he to me, 'since you are so anxious to speak, I will

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speak too. Is it not true, that if I had given you my daughter with my property, I could not have rendered you this service? Is it not true, that if you had married my daughter entirely destitute, as you desired, you would have thought that this property which I have given you would have been hers, and not mine? Is it not true, that because you are nothing to me, you would have been under a greater obligation to me, than you would have been if you were my son-in-law?' 'I must confess it.' 'Eh! well, that is just right. My friend, be always the master of your own property, and require your children, if you ever have any, to make their court to you, without putting it in their power to compel you to make your court to them. You will have children yourself some day. Do as I do with Manon; for I regard you both on the same footing, and love you with equal affection.' I was constrained to recognize the good sense of this moral lesson, which so much enraged me. I admired this man, who trusted me with his property, and who did not wish to give me his daughter."

In this scene, the character of Dupuis is painted in a pointed and striking manner, and yet it is not displeasing. While we blame Dupuis, we recognize that there is nevertheless some truth in his opinion; he only exaggerates it; but it is for this very reason that his character is placed in relief and becomes comic.

The denouement of the novel of Challes is melancholy; but it is true and moral. Dupuis sincerely wished to give his daughter to Desronais; he only wished from selfishness to put off her marriage as long as possible. He is punished for this very fault. He becomes suddenly ill, and feels that death is approaching. Then this temporizer wishes to make haste; he wishes, before dying, to see Marianne and Desronais married in his chamber; but he dies before the marriage can be consummated; and this man who had, if we may so speak, wasted the time by his selfish delay, did not have an opportunity to accomplish the only generous thought of his life.

We are astonished that Collé did not profit more by the happy inventions of Challes. Dupuis, in Collé, is rather a misanthrope than a selfish and jealous father. His soliloquies, impressed with a certain melancholy sadness, and his capri-

cious and irresolute conduct, do not give us the secret of his character.

Much has been said, in the piece, of Dupuis' want of confidence, as if it were a universal distrust and a genuine misanthropy.

. . . . You do not know the extreme distrust
With which his heart is filled against the human race.
Act iii. scene 5.

says Desronais to Marianne ; but it is not the human family that Dupuis distrusts, it is his son-in-law. He is not dissatisfied with the whole world ; his dissatisfaction is confined to one point, to the idea of disposing of his daughter and his fortune to a man who, receiving all from the law and the custom of society, rather than from his affection and generosity, will not consider himself bound to love him. Such is his care, and such is his character.

We much prefer the denouement of Challes to that of Collé. In Collé, Dupuis concludes by being touched with compassion, and consents to the marriage of his daughter with Desronais.

And if it is possible, be always my friend, [*says he to him,*]
Although you become my son-in-law.

These two last verses are the finest in the piece, and afford the best illustration of the character of Dupuis. But the denouement is vulgar. The Theatre is overrun with spendthrifts, who, in the fifth act, become economical ; gamblers, who have quit gambling ; misers, who have become generous ; malignant persons who forget their hatred, and bad persons who become good. But we do not think that to make a moral metamorphosis of the character of the principal personage, is the natural denouement of a comedy.

We must confess, in concluding these remarks, that paternal selfishness is difficult to represent on the stage. It is better adapted to the novel than the Theatre ; because in a novel, the author can easily explain, while in the drama, explanations soon become tedious to the spectators. At the Theatre, the exhibition of natural and simple emotions always

succeed better than those which are complicated. Paternal selfishness is therefore introduced on the stage only in the advanced state of literature, when the simple sentiments, having been exhausted, authors are forced to search in the recesses of the human heart for the subtle and strange feelings which excite curiosity. They commence with representing paternal love in its most tender and devoted traits, as well as in what it possesses of elevation and firmness; they conclude by painting it in its jealous and selfish features. They begin with Don Diego, the old Horace and the Geronte in *The Liar*; they end with Dupuis and Triboulet.

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X.

OF THE INGRATITUDE OF CHILDREN.—THE ŒDIPUS COLONÆUS OF SOPHOCLES.—THE KING LEAR OF SHAKSPEARE.—THE FATHER GORIOT OF BALZAC.

ART has two modes of elevating its character, viz. prosperity and adversity ; and of these the latter we think is the most efficacious, since it addresses itself to the feeling of pity, which is in the heart of man a more powerful source of admiration, and is not so easily exhausted. In Don Diego and the old Horace, the paternal character becomes venerable by the respect and obedience which their sons entertain for them ; but in the *Œdipus*, and in *King Lear*, this sacred character seems to become elevated, sustained by the indignation which is excited by the ingratitude of their children.

To the characters of *Œdipus* and *King Lear*, those ancient victims of filial ingratitude, we will compare the personage of one of our modern romances, Father Goriot abandoned by his daughters. This comparison will not only be advantageous to our literary studies ; for the manner in which each age conceived of this character of an outraged father shows also, if we are not mistaken, the idea which it entertained of a family, and of the force of the obligations which bind the father and his children.

Like Œdipus, King Lear is cast off by his children ; but there are, in the manner in which Sophocles and Shakspeare describe their misfortunes, differences which it is curious to observe ; differences entirely of a literary nature, which partake of the form of the ancient and modern drama—for the moral intention is the same in both ; the two poets have the same idea of the sacredness of paternal authority, and of the inevitable vengeance which is attached to ungrateful children.

From his birth to his death the destiny of Œdipus is

mysterious. Devoted to misfortune in his mother's womb, exposed at his birth upon Mount Cithæron, saved by the anger of the gods, the murderer of his father, the husband of his mother, the brother of his children, tearing out his eyes with his own hands, as unworthy to see the day when his crimes or his calamities have been revealed to him, banished from Thebes by his sons, and having his daughter, Antigone, as his only guide and support; it is at Colonna, near Athens, in a forest consecrated to the Furies, that he comes, according to the oracle of Apollo, to seek his death and burial. But, before dying, he must fulfil upon his sons the vengeance of the gods, as his sons, in banishing him, had accomplished upon him.

Every thing in *Œdipus* reveals the sacredness of the paternal character. It is for having killed their father that Eteocles and Polynice have perished miserably. A terrible connection of successive expiations, which avenge justice by crime itself; for ancient fatality is not as capricious or unjust as it at first seems: it has for its agents chance and evil, but it has justice for its end; having for its instruments unbridled passions, it avenges murder by murder, and punishes crime by crime; but justice hovers over these human passions, and directs them, in spite of themselves, to the mysterious object which it pursues.

In the *Œdipus Coloneus* there is another idea, full also of mystery, because it adds still more to the grandeur of the character of *Œdipus*. As soon as these expiations have been accomplished—as soon as the outrage offered to paternal majesty has been avenged by the death of *Œdipus* and his sons, whom the anger of the gods had pursued, the tomb of this same *Œdipus* will become, for the land that will possess it, a pledge of grandeur and power. Such is the efficacy which is attached to the expiation and the propitiatory victim: living, they strike him without mercy in the name of God—for it represents the offence which his death must do away with; and, dead, they revere him as the symbol of restored justice. *Œdipus* is a victim of this kind; and what shows that the mysterious benediction which is attached to the tomb of *Œdipus* is not a tradition which is peculiar to it, is that it is the same with the tomb of Orestes, this other type of the ancient fatality, and which is, like *Œdipus*, only an emblem of justice re-established by crime. The oracle of Apollo had

predicted to the Lacedemonians that they would be weak and conquered as long as the ashes of Orestes did not repose at Sparta.*

We do not find, in *Œdipus*, an individual who is master of his actions: *Œdipus* is the instrument of the gods, and all his actions have a divine stamp. Other fathers, in a similar situation with *Œdipus*, might have been moved to pity by the entreaties of a son prostrate at their feet. *Œdipus* is inflexible, for he represents the justice of the gods. In vain *Polynice* conjures him to pardon him; in vain *Antigone* unites her prayers to those of her brother; *Œdipus* refuses even to reply to him, the paternal voice would be profaned in speaking to an ungrateful son. Between *Œdipus* and his sons there are no more ties; ingratitude has broken them all. *Œdipus* finally replies to *Polynice*, but it is only to curse him; and these words, full of anger and revenge, he would not have accorded to his sons, if the old men of *Colonna* had not, in the name of *Theseus*, entreated him to reply to *Polynice*. Then *Œdipus*, as *Theseus* is his guest, yields to his respect for hospitality: for hospitality is also a law which comes from the gods, and, being the minister of the justice of the gods, *Œdipus* must respect it. But he does not change, on that account, the sentence which he ought to pronounce; and what is remarkable, the chorus of the old men of *Colonna* do not ask it of him, so much does the inflexibility of vengeance control all minds!

"Believe me, citizens, believe me, if it were not for *Theseus*, the sovereign of this country, who has sent him to me, requesting me to answer him, he would never have heard the sound of my voice. Let him hear, then, the words which he deserves: they will not bless and rejoice his life:

"It is you, wretch, who, in *Thebes*, when you possessed the throne and the sceptre which your brother now possesses, yourself drove away your father; you, who banished him

* The Lacedemonians had been continually unfortunate in their first war against the *Tegeates*; but, in the time of *Cræsus*, and under the reign of *Alexandride* and *Ariston* at *Sparta*, they acquired the superiority by means which I may relate. As they always had been beaten by the *Tegeates*, they sent to demand of the oracle at *Delphi* what god they must propitiate in order to get the advantage over their enemies. The *Pythoness* replied, that they would conquer if they brought home the bones of *Orestes*, the son of *Agamemnon*.—*HERODOTUS*, b. i. ch. 67.

from his country ; you, who made him wear these miserable rags with which you weep to see me clothed, now that you are exiled and unfortunate as me ! But these evils I will no longer lament ; I will preserve them in preserving in my heart, while I live, the memory of your parricide ; for it is you who have reduced me to this miserable condition ; it is you who cast me off, and compelled me to wander from place to place, begging the bread of charity from the hands of the stranger. In a word, if I had not these two daughters, who administer to my necessities, I should have died, and by your crime. They are my guardians and nurses ; they made themselves men, to suffer with me : you, you are not my sons ! . . . No, you shall not overthrow the ramparts of Thebes, which you are hastening to beseige ; but your brother and yourself, drowned in each other's blood, shall perish under its walls. These are the imprecations which I call down upon you, and which I still invoke, to teach you to respect those from whom you have obtained your life, and not to despise your father, because he is blind . . . Begone ; I deny and forswear you ; begone, then, execrable son, and take my curses with you. May you never recover your country, nor even return to Argos, your place of exile ! May you perish by a brother's hand ; and may your brother, at the same time, perish by yours ! May hell, which I invoke, hell, the author of the misfortunes of our family, receive you into its horrible abodes ! I invoke against you the Furies, who preside in these regions ; I invoke the god Mars, who has insinuated into the heart of your brother and yourself this implacable hatred against me. You have heard me ; go and tell to the Thebans, and to your faithful allies, the vows which Œdipus has made upon his sons."

Ducis has also made an *Œdipus Coloneus* ; but Ducis, a poet of the eighteenth century, has not given to his Œdipus the implacable firmness of the antique Œdipus. The Œdipus of Ducis is a Christian Œdipus ; he is, moreover, we may say, such a father as the eighteenth century loved to represent on the stage : the tender father, and even a little lachrymose.

The Œdipus of Ducis at first resists, like the Œdipus of Sophocles, the entreaties of Polynice ; he even curses him, and, in this malediction, the verses of Ducis are often translated, or what is better, inspired of Sophocles :

I render thanks to these hands, which in my despair,
 Have saved me from the horror of seeing you—
 Towards Thebes, your camp is rushing on your footsteps :
 I attach to your colors, terror and flight.
 May all these seven chiefs, who have pledged to you their faith,
 By a new oath all arm themselves against you !
 May all nature, at your perfidious looks
 Be lit up by the fire of the Furies !
 May this bloody sceptre, which your hand hopes to seize,
 At the moment of reaching it, escape your desire !
 May Eteocles and you, deprived of funeral rites,
 Both rip open each other's bowels !
 On all the Theban fields, may you be able
 To acquire only space enough to cover your body !
 And to overwhelm you with horror, lying in the dust,
 May you die as a subject and braved by your brother !
 Adieu : you may go. Relate to your friends
 The reception and the vows which I keep for my sons.

Act iii. scene 5.

These beautiful verses, full of anger and revenge, are
 worthy of the antique Œdipus. But very soon the modern
 Œdipus arrives. Polynice, although cursed, persists in sup-
 plicating his father ; he threatens to kill him, which has
 scarcely moved the antique Œdipus ; but the modern Œdi-
 pus has a heart less firm :

What do I hear ? Where am I ? O heaven ! If it were virtue !
 I hesitate. . . . I doubt. . . . Ingrate, do you repent ?
 Do you not deceive me ? Can I yet believe you ?

Act iii. scene 5.

At last he embraces Polynice, and his son exclaims,

What ! you still love me ! What ! already you hated

Œdipus. Do you believe it gives a father so much pain to forgive ?

Ibid.

These are beautiful and almost sublime verses, but of a
 sublimity altogether modern, if we may so speak ; for the
 sublime is possible only in changing not only the character
 of Œdipus such as antiquity conceived it, but especially the
 moral idea which the history of Œdipus inculcates.

Œdipus, according to the ancient morality, could not for-
 give his sons for the injury done to himself, because this in-
 jury affected the majesty of all fathers, and destroyed the
 sanctity of paternal reverence. In order to remit crime an

atonement, and not pardon, was necessary. According to Christian morality, pardon sufficed, because the evil that was not repaired here below would be repaired in another life, by chastisements for crime, and rewards for virtue. Divine justice is not pledged to fulfil itself entirely in this world. If a crime is not noticed by the law, or remitted by the pardon of the victim, that does not destroy the established order, since the immortality of the soul reserves its mysterious guaranties beyond this world. In paganism, on the contrary, all was to be accomplished. Hence the irresistible power of the ancient Nemesis, who reigned so much the more imperiously upon earth, since she reigned only here, and her power to punish expired with the life of the victims.

We have exhibited the character, such as Sophocles has conceived it; but there were in ancient times, different traditions with regard to this character, and all did not give him this austere grandeur which the grave and solemn genius of Sophocles has attributed to it. In the *Little Thebæi*, of which the scholiast of Sophocles has preserved some verses which would incline us to believe that this was a heroi-comic poem, Œdipus is no longer the minister of the ancient fatality; he is a whimsical and suspicious old man, whose anger and sadness have neither grandeur nor gravity. If he curses his children, it is not because they have cast him off and proscribed him; it is because on a day for offering sacrifices, instead of sending him the shoulder of the victim, as was the custom, they sent him the thigh, which was a less honorable portion. Thereupon Œdipus thought himself outraged, and prayed to "the sovereign Jupiter and the other immortals, that his sons, slain by each other, would immediately go down to hell." This gloomy and restless Œdipus, whom misfortune has soured and made miserable, naturally leads us to King Lear as Shakspeare has represented him.

Like Œdipus, King Lear is rejected by his ungrateful children, and, like Œdipus, he curses them; a fatal malediction which is fulfilled by the death of Regan and Goneril. But apart from this resemblance, there is between Œdipus and Lear a great difference of character. Obedient to the influence of a mysterious power, the actions of Œdipus do not seem to be his own: whether he strikes his father unconsciously, or curses his ungrateful sons, he is the instru-

ment of the gods. King Lear, on the contrary, seems to be the representative of human liberty in its weakness and caprices. If he is rejected by his two daughters, Regan and Goneril, it is his own fault ; for he has scorned the counsel of Kent, his oldest and most faithful servant, who advised him not to abdicate his authority, and not to confide in the gratitude of his two daughters. Not only has King Lear despised and exiled the faithful Kent, he has also rejected the young Cordelia, his beloved daughter, the only one who loved him with a sincere and disinterested love ; but the filial love of Cordelia does not permit her to use the flattering words of her two sisters. When her father asks her to say how much she loves him, offering her an empire in return for the protestations of tenderness which he expected from her, she was silent ; for the sincere and genuine sentiments are reserved, and Lear does not comprehend how full of affection is this silence. He prefers to this mute devotion the emphatic and false professions of Regan and Goneril.

We are not astonished that, with this violence of the passions which Shakspeare has given him, Lear should lose his reason as soon as the ingratitude of his children enabled him to see his folly. Passionate and weak natures who do not wish to anticipate evil, although warned of it beforehand, cannot support it when it befalls them. Such is King Lear. His grief and his anger do not possess the calmness and gravity of the old *Œdipus*. *Œdipus* is tranquil and firm, because he is always obedient to the mysterious will of the gods, and not his own. In Lear, grief borders on despair, and anger is converted into madness, because all his misfortunes having been brought upon him by his own imprudence, the thought that he could have avoided them comes incessantly to exasperate and madden him. Hence his madness. We are aware that madness is one of the common subjects of the English drama ; and as this common dramatic subject has been often employed in our days, we will examine, in another chapter, how and on what conditions it has figured upon the stage from the time of the Greeks to our own days. But it suffices for us to remark at present that the madness of King Lear springs naturally from the very character which Shakspeare wished to give him.

We have just pointed out a difference between *Œdipus*

and King Lear, which extends to the foundation of the two characters, and perhaps also to the genius of the two theatres. We will point out another, which relates to the different progress of the drama in Sophocles and in Shakspeare.

Among the Greeks, the plot is always simple. The drama only represents one period of the life of the hero; but this period is that which exhibits his character or his destiny in bold relief. Thus in *King Œdipus*, the leading incident of the drama is the fatal moment when Œdipus learns his crimes and his misfortunes; and in *Œdipus Colonnaus* it is the moment when Œdipus dies in refusing to pardon his sons. The modern dramatists, and especially Shakspeare, permit in the action of the drama too much continuance and variety. Shakspeare represents the whole life of man; not that he does not select the most dramatic moments; but he collects many, and loves to place them in opposition to each other; whence arise their chief interest. Thus we see first the moment of imprudence and blindness when Lear, upon the faith of the fine words of his two daughters, divides his kingdom between them, and disinherits his daughter Cordelia, the only one who loves him without ambition. Then comes the moment of his grief and anger,—when, rejected by his two daughters, he curses them; and finally, the drama also has its moment of tenderness and pity, when Lear recognizes Cordelia, and bewails her death.

The liberty which Shakspeare takes of introducing on the stage the whole history of Lear, enables us to witness the different passions which agitate the soul of his hero, and to anticipate their first explosion. When Œdipus flies to Colonna, it is already a long time since he has been banished by his sons. We do not witness this scene of ingratitude; we only perceive it by the feelings of anger and grief which it has left in the soul of Œdipus. This grief and this anger have more the violence of their first outbreak; they are inflexible. If we compare the imprecations of King Lear against Goneril with those of Œdipus against Polynice, the difference is striking :

. . . . Hear, nature, hear;
Dear goddess, hear! Suspend thy purpose,
If thou didst intend to make this creature fruitful;
Into her womb convey sterility!
Dry up in her the organs of increase;

And from her derogate body never spring	we no more
A babe to honor her! If she must teem,	Antigone,
Create her child of spleen; that it may live	character
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her!	er crazy
Let it stamp wrinkles on her brow of youth;	erpasses
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;	
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits	ween
To laughter and contempt; that she may feel	ause
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is	had
To have a thankless child!"	

Œdipus is certainly as angry as Lear, but he is less agitated. He curses Polynice with the voice and language of a judge and an avenger, rather than that of an offended and enraged father. Œdipus thinks of paternal majesty outraged in his person, and he renews his imprecations against his sons, "in order that they may learn to respect the author of their days, and not insult the misfortunes of a father." Lear thinks only of the indignity offered to himself, and to gratify his revenge he seeks for the most cruel chastisement possible; not such as Œdipus invoked upon the heads of his sons, "the loss of power, and a violent death by each other's hands;" but he desires that his daughter may have an ungrateful son, who would "turn all his mother's pains and benefits to laughter and contempt."

We remark a difference of the same kind in the manner in which Œdipus and Lear express their sufferings. The suffering of Œdipus is grave and majestic. If he speaks of his misery and his exile, it is particularly with a view of commending the tenderness of his daughters, Antigone and Ismene, who accompany him and administer to his comforts. He seeks an asylum, since he has no country; but it is to find the place where his ashes are predestined to repose. In these strokes of misfortune, which have nothing human, we forget the beggar, the blind man, and the vagabond, and see in Œdipus nothing but the mysterious guest of the furies, the victim and minister of the justice of the gods; and we then understand why his complaint is dignified and reserved, and why in his suffering there is nothing which is addressed to vulgar pity.

Such is not King Lear. There is, if we may so speak, the same agitation in his misfortune, and the same excess, as in his sentiments. Shakspeare does not spare him any of the ordinary sufferings of misery: night without a place of re-

and King Lear without shelter, wandering on the heath, the bed character, and when his grief ends in madness, he represents a real madman, as well as a real beggar. He is in extravagant speeches, sings foolish songs, wears ragged garments, puts a crown of poppy and vervain on his head, and in short, exhibits all the signs of madness. Shakspeare, it is true, draws from this very degradation, the most touching emotions. The storm brings from Lear these sublime apostrophes :

“ Blow, wind, and crack your cheeks ! rage ! blow !
 You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
 Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks.
 You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
 Vaunt couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
 Singe my white head ! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
 Strike flat the thick rotundity o’ the world !
 Crack nature’s moulds, all germins spill at once,
 That make ingrateful man !
 Rumble thy bellyful ! Spit fire ! Spout rain !
 Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters :
 I tax not you, ye elements, with unkindness,
 I never gave you kingdoms, called you children,
 You owe me no subscription ; why then let fall
 Your horrible displeasure ; here I stand your slave,
 A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man ;—
 But yet I call you servile ministers,
 That have with two pernicious daughters joined
 Your high-engendered battles, ’gainst a head
 So old and white as this.”

The madness of Lear introduces also the beautiful scene, where Cordelia weeps over her sick father. It pains us, we confess, to witness the madness of Lear, when he utters foolish expressions which cannot make us laugh, (for madness is a melancholy thing in spite of its extravagancies,) and which can no longer affect us, although mingled with some flashes of good sense : for the fantasies of madness too quickly interrupt the emotion of grief. But we love and admire Lear, when, awakened by the kisses of his beloved daughter Cordelia, he strives to recognize her ; when struggling in vain to recover his reason, he believes that he sees his daughter, and fears, nevertheless, that he may be deceived. This struggle between madness and paternal instinct, is profoundly touching. Then, we no longer complain that Shakspeare has

pushed even to madness the grief of Lear ; then, we no more regret the severe majesty of the grief of Œdipus. Antigone, guiding her old blind father, is the most touching character in the ancient drama ; Cordelia, taking care of her crazy father, and assisting him in recovering his senses, surpasses Antigone in pity, if not in virtue.

We have pointed out the literary differences between Œdipus and King Lear, Shakspeare and Sophocles, because they aid us in comprehending the idea which the Greeks had of the drama. But what we desire particularly to remark, because that relates to the subject of our reflections, is the resemblance of intention in Sophocles and in Shakspeare. Both have the same idea of the sacred authority of fathers ; both believed that the child which offended the paternal majesty, must perish miserably. Hence the grandeur of their Œdipus and their King Lear : they are fathers, and fathers outraged by their ungrateful children. Under this sacred character disappeared the crimes of Œdipus, and the faults of Lear : that one should have been, against his will, a parricide and incestuous : that the other should have been proud and credulous in prosperity, that he rejected his old servant Kent, and his daughter Cordelia ; it is for the gods to remember these faults and to cause them to be expiated. But

A son does not arm himself against a guilty father ;
He turns away his eyes, pities and reveres him.

VOLTAIRE. *Brutus*, Act i.

Such is the sacred law imposed upon children, and whoever violates it will perish in the midst of his days : they will fall slain by each other's hands, these two sons of Œdipus, who have made him a beggar and a vagabond ; they will then fall slain by each other, these daughters of Lear, who have driven him away from the palace which he has given them, and have driven him to madness by their cruelty ; they will both perish, cursed and detested even in death, in order that the divine law upon Sinai may be verified : "Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother, in order that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

We have seen what a grand and majestic idea Sophocles and Shakspeare had of the paternal character. Let us see what this character has become in one of our modern romances, the *Father Goriot* of De Balzac.

There is displayed in this romance much talent, much invention and observation. There are even scenes in which the tenderness of Father Goriot is exceedingly touching. But we compare the *Father Goriot* with *Œdipus* and *King Lear*, in order to study the changes which have been made, from age to age, in the manner of conceiving and expressing the most generous emotions of the human heart. Every people, in fact, begin their career, having some grand ideas and sentiments destined to keep society alive, and which are, if we may so speak, its *viaticum*, a viaticum which it expends in its progress; and we have seen misanthropes, who thought that what was called the work of civilization, was nothing but the consumption of this fund of the old virtues, which sustains and defrays the expenses of society.

Father Goriot is an old merchant, who, having made a large fortune, has retired to a boarding-house in the Faubourg St. Marceau, where he lives very meanly. He has given all his property to his two daughters, who have married; one a Count, and the other a banker. These daughters are ungrateful; are ashamed of their father, and only go to see him to beg for money, for the good man idolizes them. He has given them every thing, reserving only a few hundred francs of rent and some silver, both of which he sells to gratify the fancies of his daughters, and ends by expiring on a mean little bed without their coming even to see him die.

Such is the history of Father Goriot. Certainly, there is a great difference between *Œdipus*, *King Lear*, and *Father Goriot*; but they are all fathers outraged by their children. By virtue of this title, he has a right to their respect and pity. Yet, in order to move us, this outraged father ought to resent the injury done to his paternal character; he ought to preserve the consciousness of the authority which he has over his children, and of the respect which they owe him. It is not only necessary that he should love his daughters, he ought also to know that he is loved by them, and that they are culpable if they despise or neglect him. He ought to have something of the anger of *Œdipus*, or the grief of *Lear*. It is not necessary in order to interest us, that he should be either a prince or a king: but it is necessary that he should be a father, and that he should maintain the dignity of a man.

The love which Father Goriot has for his daughters, resembles that of Triboulet for Blanche: it proceeds from in-

stinct ; and in order that we may not be under any delusion with regard to the kind of affection which Father Goriot entertains, the author takes care to define it : " It was," said he, " an unreflecting feeling which elevated Father Goriot to the sublime of canine nature." We do not here find this paternal love, intelligent and serious, which is at once a virtue and a happiness ; this love united to authority, which renders authority more pleasant and obedience more agreeable. The love of Father Goriot is irresistible and instinctive ; his tenderness also has all the characteristics of instinct. Their violence, their tenacity, their frenzy in joy as in grief : the forgetfulness, or rather the impossibility of every thought which is foreign to his passion. The novelist represents him as stupid in every respect, except on the side of his brain which corresponds to his instinct. What is curious to remark is, that all the words which the author makes use of to describe the paternal love of Father Goriot, are borrowed from material passion. Thus when Father Goriot embraces his daughter, " he hugs her with a wild and delirious embrace ;" and again, " he lies down at the feet of his daughter to kiss them ; he rubs his head against her gown ;" in short, he commits all the follies of the most youthful and ardent lover. Again, in a scene of anger and insults between the two daughters of Father Goriot, one of them stops, suddenly terrified at " the savage and crazy expression which grief impresses upon the countenance of her father." In fine, when Goriot, dying, sends for his daughters, who do not come ; when he confesses his paternal passion, how does he express himself when even in despair he acknowledges the ingratitude of his children ? " My daughters, it was my own fault, they were my mistresses ! . . . I swallowed all their insults, while they were selling my little comforts." Here we see a romancer, who wishes to describe paternal love, the most pure, the most intelligent, the most holy of human affections ; and wishing to give to his age a lively and strong idea, he renders it brutal and vicious.

We cannot have for this feeling of paternity, " pushed to derision," any other sentiment but that of pity ; for monomania saddens us, or makes us laugh, according to our tastes ; but it is not attractive. Can we be more affected, when, instead of this language borrowed from the dictionary of physiology and medicine, the author, in describing the

paternal love of Father Goriot, uses words consecrated to describing another kind of love? This transposition of sentiments and style shocks us still more. When Madame Guyon expressed how much she loved God, she also borrowed her expressions from the language of human passions; her style made a lover of God; and Bossuet, indignant at this profane confusion of words, prays that God would send the most burning of his cherubim, to purify with a live coal, taken from his altar, the lips which spoke of the love of God, as we speak of the love of man. And we may also demand that the burning coal of the cherubim would purify the lips of a father who speaks of paternal love as they speak of the love of lovers.

All is of a piece in the conduct of Father Goriot. He does not feel paternal love as he should, since he feels it as an uncontrollable instinct, instead of feeling it as a pious affection, which has its rules and its obligations; he expresses it badly, since he uses, in expressing the most chaste of sentiments, the most impure language; in fine he makes a bad use of it, since in his daughters he loves every thing—their vices, as well as their virtues—and he regards the one as the other, and the vices more than the virtues, because they are the vices which particularly require a blind devotion.

The comparison which we have endeavored to make between *Œdipus*, *King Lear*, and Father Goriot, would be incomplete, if we did not compare the death of these personages. Death reveals the whole man: it expresses in a decided man how he has lived. Let us see how *Œdipus*, *King Lear*, and Father Goriot die.

The death of *Œdipus* is like all his life, full of terror and grandeur. He is not a man who expires; it is a mystery which is accomplished. *Œdipus* curses and rejects Polynice; he has pronounced upon his ungrateful sons, the decree of divine justice. Suddenly the thunder rolls. *Œdipus* understands the voice of the God who calls him. He demands Theseus, for Theseus alone must know the mystery of his death and his tomb. Theseus arrives, and then *Œdipus*, as if his blind eyes had acquired a wonderful clear-sightedness, "Follow me, my daughters," says he, "follow me; it is I who must guide you now, as you for a long time guided your father. Do not touch me; permit me to find myself the sacred tomb where destiny wills that I should be buried in the bosom of

this earth. . . . Come here, come ; it is there that Mercury and the Goddess of Hell conduct me. . . ." He thus walks with a firm and steady step ; and while he is going, the chorus, prostrate at the foot of the altar of the Furies, sings this funeral hymn :

" O invisible Goddess ! and you, O Pluto, sovereign of eternal night, if I may presume to address to you my prayers, I beg you to permit this old man, by a peaceable death, quietly to repose in the bosom of the Styx, in this region of the dead, where all is engulfed."

During the chanting of this funeral hymn, far from profane eyes, is the denouement of the destiny of *Cædipus* ; for the end of the mystery is concealed in the bosom of the gods. All that can be known is, "that this blind man, who walked without a guide, has reached the borders of the gulf, of which the brazen-groundworks are attached to the earth ; he stops at the place where the road branches in many directions, near a deep crater, where stand the monuments of friendship which Theseus and Pirithous formerly pledged to each other, in descending to the infernal regions. . . . He takes off the garments which cover him ; and calling his daughters, he orders them to bring him some pure water for his libations. Both of them hasten to the hill of Ceres, which they see hard by, and execute the orders of their father. They bathe him, and clothe him with new garments, according to the prescribed rites. Scarcely has he tasted the sweetness of the services which they render him ; scarcely have all his orders been complied with, than Jupiter causes a subterraneous roll of thunder. His two daughters shudder in hearing it, and falling at the knees of their father, with their eyes in tears, they beat their breasts and utter long groans. *Cædipus*, on his part, has no sooner heard this dreadful noise, than extending his arms over his daughters : ' O my children,' says he, ' you have no longer a father ! all is consummated. . . . ' At these words the father and his children, embracing each other, sob and weep together. Finally, their tears being calmed, and silence succeeding to their cries, a voice is suddenly heard : it calls *Cædipus*. Terror seizes us, and our hair stands erect on our heads. But the voice of the god still thundered : '*Cædipus* ! *Cædipus* ! who stops you ? Let us proceed. You are slow.' Scarcely has *Cædipus* recognized the voice of the god, than touching his two daugh-

ters with his trembling hands: 'My children,' says he, 'you must leave this place, and not request to see and hear what is forbidden you. Go! Retire! Let Theseus alone remain: he alone must be witness of what is about to happen. . . .' At this command, we retire; and his daughters follow us, groaning, and shedding tears. But at some steps hence, we turn around: *Œdipus* had disappeared; and Theseus, with his hand over his forehead, hid his eyes, as if struck with terror at the sight of some horrible spectacle. Very soon after we have seen him prostrate himself, and worship, at the same time, both the earth, and Olympus, where the gods reside. Theseus, alone, among mortals, can henceforth say in what manner *Œdipus* has perished."

This is a terrible and majestic scene; and, in order that nothing may be wanting to the beauty of this mysterious death, we remark that the filial piety of *Antigone* and *Ismene* accompanies *Œdipus* to the borders of the grave, and that their tears follow him after his death: for there is no beautiful death for fathers except that of being lamented by their children. "My father," exclaims *Antigone*, who regrets this father whom she nourished and guided, "my father, in my misfortune, I found pleasure in bestowing my cares upon you: for misfortunes have also their charm."

The death of *Lear* is more melancholy and painful than that of *Œdipus*. It is *Lear's* fault, if he has trusted to the perfidious flatteries of *Regan* and *Goneril*, and has disinherited the devoted *Cordelia*. He has already been punished, by the ingratitude of the daughters whom he has crowned; he will be more cruelly punished, by the death of *Cordelia*: for the chastisement of this father, who is not able to discern the devoted and silent tenderness of his daughter, is the incapacity to enjoy it, when he has at last discovered it. This last stroke of fate, this last effect of his faults, overwhelms the desolate old man. He had, with difficulty, recovered his reason, owing to the touching care of his beloved daughter; in losing his daughter, he relapses into madness; but now, madness exhausts the remainder of his strength, and his life escapes, in an agony of grief and delirium, striving, in vain, to recognize the living who surround him, the faithful *Kent*, the devoted *Edgar*, the Duke of Albany, but only recognizing the dead, who were still more closely pressing around him. *Cordelia*, whom he holds dead in his arms, *Cordelia*, "with

her voice ever soft, gentle, and low," this voice which had driven from his ear the importunate tingling of madness; his daughters, Regan and Goneril, "had fore-done themselves, and desperately were dead;" and the poor fool, who had never quitted him, is also dead.

O see, see—and my poor fool is hanged. No, no, no, life!
 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
 And thou, no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more!
 Never, never, never, never, never—
 Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.
 Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
 Look there, look there—

and he himself falls down dead!

This is certainly a horrible and melancholy death. Let us come now to the death of Father Goriot. He is stricken with apoplexy. A violent dispute between his two daughters, the news of the disaster of their fortunes, the idea of their future misery, have created an excitement, which terminated in a fit of apoplexy. In the agony of death, the old man, acknowledging the ingratitude of his daughters, sometimes rebukes them, with anger and curses, and then, repenting of it, he prays heaven not to punish them; for it is he who has been the cause of all the evil, it is he who has spoiled them by his indulgence and kindness. This agony is melancholy and touching. What is wanting, then, to render him truly pathetic; and how comes it that the tears which we are disposed to shed over the death of this abandoned father, are restrained by an indescribable feeling of involuntary repugnance? As he has lived by instinct, Goriot dies the same; and what the author seems to wish to show us in this agony, is not the last struggle of the soul, but the last effort of an instinct which is about to be exhausted. In this idea, he introduces, from time to time, near the bed of the ill man, a young medical student, a great advocate of phrenological doctrines, who curiously notes the progress of the *serum* in the brain. If Father Goriot at first becomes, for a moment, overcome by illness, he soon recovers his speech, and calls his daughters to his death-bed; if he makes use of words, full of anger and grief, which affect us, the author takes care to explain, that the lobe of the brain, which responds to the paternal instinct, has, by a kind of native energy, resisted the invasion of the *serum*: it is there that life takes refuge, the

last triumph of this paternal instinct, which has controlled all the thoughts and all the actions of Father Goriot. It is this which restrains our pity, or rather, it is this which counteracts it. In seeing this father abandoned by his daughters, and who blesses them, in spite of their abandonment, we are inclined to think of the inexhaustible indulgence of the paternal heart, which is, in that respect, the image of the Divine heart ; but the idea of instinct checks us, and, in spite of ourselves, we think of the dog, which dies licking the hand of the very master who has killed him.

Lear is still half crazy when he dies ; but see how, at this last moment, reason controls madness, as the heart of man recovers itself, and as madness is effaced at the approach of death ; for Shakspeare wishes that we should witness the death of a man, and not that of a madman ; the agony of a father who has recognized his daughter, and has lost her at the same time, and not that of a poor madman, who is taken from the hospital to the grave. Shakspeare well knows that it is only on this condition that the death of Lear will affect us. *Œdipus* dies with a dignity almost divine ; Lear, although crazy, dies with all the dignity of a man. This manly dignity is wanting in the death of Father Goriot. Sophocles and Shakspeare have both removed from the death of their heroes all the circumstances of material death. They have spiritualized it as much as they were able ; Sophocles has made it divine ; Shakspeare took care to purify it from the mixture of madness, both being persuaded that, in the death of a man, there is nothing touching but what is truly human, that is to say, the departure and adieu of the soul. The modern romancer, on the contrary, has taken care to materialize death as much as he could, not only by the aid of the melancholy details which mark the dissolution of the body, but what is still more material, in showing, in Father Goriot, the last convulsions of expiring instinct. He has, if we may so speak, taken away the soul from man ; but, at the same time, and as if by way of punishment, he has detracted from the interest of his romance.

XI.

OF PATERNAL CLEMENCY—THE HEAUTONTIMORUMENOS OF TERENCE—
THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON—THE PRODIGAL SON OF
VOLTAIRE.

THERE is a trait in the paternal character for which we would reproach ourselves not to notice, especially after having pointed out the sickly sentimentality of Father Goriot: we mean this feeling of forgiveness which a father always entertains for the faults of his children. Although this sentiment be natural to man, it has not, until recently, been represented upon the stage. The heroes of the ancient Greek drama did not even pardon their sons; Orestes did not spare his mother; and Œdipus is inexorable to the prayers of Polynece. A justice as inexorable as vengeance, reigned in the Greek drama, as it did in the old Greek mythology. Neither defeat, captivity nor suffering, deprived the unfortunate of their zeal for justice, or their thirst for revenge. In Æschylus, Prometheus, enchained on Caucasus, refused to pardon Jupiter the injury which he received. "We must injure those who injure us," said he: and he prefers rather to be taken captive and tortured, than to renounce the power and the right which he has to avenge himself.

In antiquity, the Achilles of Homer is the only hero who permits himself to be moved by the tears of his enemy. He only restores to Priam, it is true, the body of his son; yet, this scene of pity is, in ancient literature, a scene apart; and there, as elsewhere, Homer has not only preceded Greek literature and civilization, but he has also anticipated and directed their progress in what they contain most pure and refined; he seems to have wished in his Achilles, who is the model of a hero such as he has conceived him, to show the

germ of this feeling of clemency, which is one of the most beautiful attributes of the human heart. When Achilles restores to Priam the body of his son, he yields to the respect which the ancients entertained for the rites of burial. Yet he weeps also over the misfortunes of Priam, his enemy ; and in the heroes of antiquity, this sentiment is entirely new. It is moreover to Homer that we are indebted for this beautiful allegory of the lame and timid virgins, although daughters of Jupiter, who follow at slow paces, Vengeance running before them, and alleviating the pains which their cruel predecessor has caused. Happy is the man who salutes them with respect when they approach him : for they listen to him, and propitiate the favor of their father ; but they demand of Jupiter, to send winged Vengeance on the footsteps of the wretch who dares to repel and disdain them.

If we consult the history of Rome, the fathers did not pardon their sons any more than the heroes of the Greek tragedy. In Roman society, paternity was rather a magistracy than a relation of affection. By degrees, however, their manners and sentiments became more refined. Philosophy in Greece, and more recently at Rome, endeavored to correct the gods of paganism ; it moderated the inflexible power of the ancient Nemesis : goodness became one of the attributes of divinity, and for man, one of the degrees which enables him to approximate nearer to the Deity. "Do you wish then," said Seneca, the last interpreter of the pagan philosophy, "do you wish then to have the gods inexorable to the faults and errors of mortals, the gods who pursue the guilty, even to their ruin ?"

Thus, the ancient severity of the gods was by degrees mitigated. It was the same with men. There is in this respect a singular difference, that may be observed between the ancient and modern drama. Already in Euripides, who had introduced philosophical ideas on the stage, the heroes preached clemency and pardon, (mercy and forgiveness.) "Fools," exclaimed Theseus in *The Suppliants*, "do you know the calamities of human destiny ? Life is a struggle : one is victorious to-day, another to-morrow. Destiny alone is always triumphant, implored by the unfortunate who demand happiness, adored by the rich who fear a reverse. It is for this reason that we should learn to pardon whoever does us an injustice, and not to seek a revenge which may be fatal

to our country." Certainly in thinking thus, Theseus is rather a disciple of Socrates than the companion of Hercules, and these sentiments of mutual indulgence are not of the heroic times.

In the new comedy of Menander, and in his imitators, whom we know by the imitations of Plautus and Terence, the improvement in morals became every day more apparent, and the paternal character especially partakes of this indulgence. We find in the fragments of Menander, and the comic writers of his school, many sentences which, far from agreeing with the antique severity of sententious poetry, express already all the tenderness which the father should feel for his son. "A good father," said Menander, "ought not to be angry with his son." But if the son is a spendthrift and a prodigal, should not the father be angry with him? "No:" says Menander, "give with a good grace to your son, whatever he wants, if you wish that he would take care of you in your old age, instead of desiring its end." Thus already in Menander, the fathers scold their sons, and become pacified, being overcome by their paternal tenderness; their anger, as he himself said, does not last longer than the quarrels of lovers.

When Plautus and Terence introduced the Greek comedy at Rome, they at the same time introduced those kind and indulgent fathers who seemed scarcely suited to the severity of Roman manners. But at this epoch Rome was prepared for the mildness of the new maxims which the two poets taught on the stage. It was the time of Scipio, when the old Latin barbarity was softened by the imitation of Greek civilization. Of the ancient Roman virtues, courage alone survived; but the chiefs began to avail themselves of the courage of the soldiery: the most virtuous, like Scipio, for their glory; the bravest, like Marius and Sylla, for their ambition.

A play of Terence portrays the revolution which was accomplished at this time in Roman manners; it is the comedy, or rather the drama, of *Héautontimorumenos*, or the Self-executioner. Menedemus, the hero of this drama, wished to be severe with his son; he has driven him to desperation by his severities, and his son quits him and flies to Asia. From this moment Menedemus becomes miserable. He retires into the country, overwhelmed with sorrow and remorse. He lives there, all day working like a hireling to punish

himself for his cruelty towards his son. "Is it customary to be one's own executioner?" said his neighbor, Chremes, to him, who witnessed his sorrow, and the tortures which he inflicted upon himself. "Yes, I must be my own tormentor," replied Menedemus sadly. "Why? What ails you? Tell me the cause of your sorrow." "Alas!" said Menedemus, "I have a son who is still very young. What do I say? I have a son! I *had* a son; I do not know if I have him still." And then he relates to Chremes the day of the flight of his son, when, as soon as he heard this news, he returned to his house, sad, solitary, and with his mind overwhelmed with grief. "I sat myself down in despair. My slaves, pressing around me, were anxious to take off my sandals; some prepared my couch, others my supper; each one did his best to please me and to dispel my grief. And seeing this anxiety, I said to myself, Alas! so many people occupied in serving me! So many slaves to satisfy my desires! So much expense for me alone! and my only son, who ought to enjoy these goods as well as me, and more than me, I have driven away: I have rendered him wretched by my injustice."

How pleasing to the Roman youth must have been the recital of the grief and the remorse of this father, who accused himself of too much severity towards his son! And what a blow given to the paternal power must have been the spectacle of a father himself repenting of the use which he had made of his authority!

By the side of this father, who repents of his rigor, Terence, as if endeavoring to break down the respect which was formerly attached to the paternal authority, has represented a father injudicious in the exercise of his power, who believed himself respected, and whom his sons and his slaves vie with each other in duping and deceiving. Chremes preaches the grand maxims of Roman authority, but his son, Clitiphon, contests them boldly. "Fathers," says he, "are truly unjust towards their children. It would be necessary, according to them, that we should be born old, and that we should not love the pleasures which are suitable to youth; they wish to govern us by the passions which they have now, and not by those which they had when they were young. If I had a son, he would have in me an indulgent father; for I wish that he would no more hesitate to confess to me his faults, than I would hesitate to pardon them." It is

true that, in this comedy, paternal authority is attacked at once by the remorse of Menedemus and by the reasonings of Clitiphon.

This son of Menedemus, so much pitied and so anxiously expected, very soon returns to Athens. In vain Chremes, with his ill-timed prudence, wishes that Menedemus should not hasten to cast himself on the neck of his son, and intimates to him that he ought to preserve his paternal dignity. Menedemus repels these attentions. "My son!" he exclaims, "is my son returned?" "Yes," said Chremes. "Ah, carry me, that I may see him and embrace him." "Wait," said Chremes; "you will lose every thing if you show him first your kindness and affection." "No, no! I have been too long severe; I wish to see him and embrace him." "But take care; he has with him an extravagant courtesan; he will ruin you." "Let him do what he wishes; let him take every thing; let him ruin me: I consent, provided I can only have him with me."

We love this anxiety of Menedemus to see and to embrace his son. But we must remark how far we are from the harshness of the old Roman manners. Paternal affection seems, in the *Héautontimorumenos*, to incline towards this tone of sentimental tenderness, which we find more recently in the comedies and dramas of the French Theatre of the eighteenth century. The paternal love of Menedemus has some of the characteristics of modern paternal love; it resembles what we call sensibility, or, more properly, instinct; it is impetuous, irresistible, impatient to satisfy itself at any price. It is curious to observe how, in the comedy of Menander and his Latin imitators, the paternal character passed quickly from the ancient austerity to an almost pathetic softness, without stopping at the proper degree of tenderness and firmness in which it really consists. In thus following the history of paternal love among the Greeks and Romans, we may say that its decline preceded its perfection.

When paternal love declined at Rome, into a languishing state of feebleness and imbecility, a milder and more elevated type of it appeared in the Gospel. The parable of the Prodigal Son is the most beautiful and touching lesson of paternal clemency which man has ever received. But even for the people of God this lesson was entirely new. The fathers in the Old Testament had not this paternal ten-

derness as we see it represented in the parable of the Prodigal Son ; and in this respect Jewish antiquity resembles Greek and Roman antiquity. Abraham goes to seek in the desert the place designated by God where he should sacrifice his son ; he walks for three days, having with him his son, who innocently inquires where is the victim ; and during these three days he is not troubled, nor does he express any sorrow. Jephthah sacrifices his daughter to the vow which he made to the Lord ; and in these sacrifices, accomplished without murmuring by the people of God, as in those of Agamemnon and Idomeneus, faith controls paternal tenderness, and the father disappeared in the believer, as in the Brutuses and Manliuses of ancient Rome he disappeared in the citizen. In the early stages of society, institutions, whether religious or politic, subdued man until they had almost extinguished his natural affections ; but, in proportion as institutions became milder and more lax in their discipline, the natural affections became more powerful. The beautiful and true point of civilization is that where the law, being at once merciful and wise, imposes upon the heart a rule which accords with the affections, and directs without restraining them. Such is the rule which the parable of the Prodigal Son seems to impose on paternal love. There, in fact, paternal love is infinite in its mercy ; but the repentance of the son, foreseen by the father, takes from this love what would otherwise seem to be weak and culpable, and the father is at once just and merciful ; just, because his son weeps over his faults ; merciful, because he does not require a confession of his sins in order to pardon him.

It may be thought profane by some to compare the father of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel, with the Menedemus of Terence. But, seeking the most perfect type of paternal love, it is natural that we should find it in the Divine Book which has given to all the sentiments of man their rule and model ; and if paternal love in the parable of the Prodigal Son, is more just and elevated than in the Menedemus of Terence, without being less touching and tender ; if literary beauty is here allied with moral beauty, it is not astonishing. In literature, the beautiful and the good accord oftener than we believe in our days. We will quote a few verses of this parable of the Prodigal Son, so often repeated in the pulpit, and always with effect : " But when he was yet a great

way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

In this narrative, in which we perceive nothing of the rebellious stirring of the passions, which the stage is disposed to substitute for the genuine emotions of the heart, all is said, or rather all is anticipated, both how much the father suffered in the absence of his son, and what wishes he expresses for his return; for he was not less sorry than Menedemus, and was not less anxious than he to receive his son; but it is in this that is manifested the moral superiority of the paternal clemency which the Gospel teaches: that pardon is granted to the Prodigal Son, only because he has returned to virtue; *for he was dead and is alive again*. Menedemus is willing to receive his son with his vices, if he returns with them. He only wishes to see and to embrace him. His paternal instinct urges him on, and he loves his son whether he be good or bad. In the Gospel, on the contrary, the paternal affection of the father has foreseen the moral regeneration of his child; and although he has not heard the touching resolution which his son has made in his misery and solitude, to go to find his father, and to humble himself before him; yet as soon as he sees him at a distance he knows his repentance, and runs to him and embraces him. And what is so beautiful in this pardon, at once so sudden and so just, is, that paternal clemency is in the Gospel the symbol of divine mercy. To enable us to comprehend the infinite mercy of God towards us, the Gospel could not have made a more just comparison than to compare it to the clemency of a father; and at the same time, it shows by this beautiful story, how well it understands the heart of a father, to whom repentance suffices without confession, and who, like God himself, hears the penitent before he has spoken. Thus, there is no dialogue between the father and the son, and no explanations; all is accomplished in a silent and profound embracing.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the two sentiments of the human heart, which have between them a secret and divine sympathy, are elevated to the highest degree of perfection to which they can attain, and they elevate in supporting each other; affording an admirable example of infinite mercy, which does not compromise justice, and of an infinite repentance, which detracts nothing from the blessedness of reconciliation.

The narrative of the Prodigal Son, which in the Gospel is only a parable, has in all times delighted the popular imagination. In the middle ages the old church windows, and in our days the coarse paintings which are sold in the country villages, have admirably represented the adventures of the Prodigal Son. The sermons of the preacher and the popular tracts of the day, have treated this subject with a sort of predilection. Voltaire has made a comedy, or rather a drama of it; for all the comedies of Voltaire run into the drama, when they do not become dull and tiresome. It is this drama which we propose cursorily to examine.

Voltaire has given to his *Prodigal Son* the costume and manners of the eighteenth century. We do not here perceive the Prodigal Son such as we find him in the Gospel, tending swine, and in his wretchedness envying them their miserable food. Euphémon is a libertine of the eighteenth century. He has gambled, has kept mistresses, contracted debts, and has even robbed his father to enrich a prostitute; and in this Voltaire has gone too far; for if Euphémon the son must excite our interest, it is necessary to give him only the vices which the world pardons; but robbery places people out of good company, and consequently out of the interest of the drama. Having soon become ruined, Euphémon arrives at Cognac, where his father has been for some time established. Jasmin, formerly his valet, now his equal, in consequence of their common misery, accompanies him.

Yes, my friend, you were once my master;
I have served you for two years without knowing you;
Thus like me, reduced to beggary,
Your poverty has rendered me your equal.
No, you are no longer this Monsieur Entremonde,
This gay chevalier of the world,
Fêted, surrounded, and run after by the women,
Carelessly intoxicated with pleasure.

All is lost. Obliterate from your memory
These vain regrets for the happy days of your life.
When we are in misery, pride is folly.

Act iii. scene 1.

In this we see a misery of our times, that is, a misery which the sufferings of vanity especially manifest! Euphémon, the son, endeavors in vain to be a philosopher, as becomes a gallant man of the eighteenth century; it is in vain that he recognizes that Jasmin is his equal, *since he is a man*; it is this equality nevertheless, which for him, as for us, is the characteristic feature of his misery. The *Prodigal Son* of Voltaire suffers not only in his vanity, he suffers also in his love; another moral pain, another chagrin of people who are not entirely under the yoke of misery, which scarcely leaves them the leisure to love. He has loved Lise, the daughter of Rondon, a merchant of Cognac, and was loved by her; but very soon abandoned her to follow his more easy amours, and now the young Lise becomes betrothed to Fiérenfat, the brother of Euphémon. This idea drives the Prodigal Son to despair, who, as a well-instructed hero of the stage, is more sensible to the pains of love than to the sufferings of poverty:

See all my misfortunes, know their depth; (*says he to Jasmin,*)
To have drawn upon myself, by a tissue of crimes,
The just anger of a loved father,—
To be cursed, to be disinherited,
To feel the horrors of beggary,
To see my fortune pass to a younger brother,
To be compelled in my disgrace
To serve him, when he has taken all from me;
Such is my fate; I have well deserved it.
But would you believe that in the midst of suffering,
Dead to pleasure, and devoid of hope,
Hated by the world, and despised by all,
Expecting nothing, I would still dare to be jealous!

Act iii. scene 5.

These are fine verses; but we are far from the Prodigal Son of the Gospel. It is no longer between the father and the son that the interest of the drama is concentrated, it is between Lise and her old lover; and it is no longer a question of paternal clemency, but the passionate indulgence of love. We witness a scene of reconciliation between two lovers; a touching scene, and where the prayers of Euphé-

mon have a tone of repentance calculated to touch the heart of Lise. But how easy is repentance towards a beloved object! How the heart rejoices while still humbling itself! How the hope of a pardon which it is already sweet to solicit, controls remorse for a fault, corrects the bitterness and diminishes the weight of it! Lise has loved Euphémon, she still loves him, and it is for this reason that she yet pardons him; it is for this reason that she intercedes with the old Euphémon. Moreover, it seems that according to Voltaire, this is the first pardon which Lise has granted, which leads to the second, and that the father should only be indulgent after the example of the mistress:

Follow, follow, for this unfortunate one,
The good example which love has given.

Act v. scene 6.

This is to degrade, or rather to undervalue paternal love, to place it below another sentiment, more passionate perhaps, but certainly less strong and less permanent. It is to detract from the Prodigal Son the grandeur which he possesses in the Gospel; to make Euphémon one of those tender and lachrymose fathers, who, in pardoning, yield less to the repentance of their sons than to this weakness of heart which makes us pardon easily what we love, as Lise the young Euphémon; it is, in a word, to return to the Menedemus of Terence, of which the Euphémon of Voltaire has not in other respects the true and pathetic tenderness, and to quit the finest and most amiable model of paternal love to take one less elevated, without succeeding in attaining it.

XII.

THE PATERNAL CHARACTER IN COMEDY—THE FATHER OF A FAMILY OF DIDEROT—THE UNGRATEFUL SONS OF PIRON—THE TWO SONS-IN-LAW OF ETIENNE.

WE have seen how the father expressed his anger against the ingratitude of his children; we have also seen how he pardoned their faults. But when the events are of a serious and tragical nature, the paternal character easily preserves, either in its anger or clemency, all the majesty which belongs to it. In comedy, on the contrary, where the events are humorous or trivial, the dignity of the paternal character is not at its ease.

We must require of each art only that which it can accomplish. The art of comedy is to amuse us, and to make us laugh at the expense of vice, and not to inspire us with the respect and love of virtue. Fathers, in comedy, can then scarcely preserve all their dignity; they must be proportioned to the frame of the picture in which they are represented. In a word, comedy, to express ourselves fully, is not respectful in its nature; it readily attaches disgrace to the ingratitude of sons or sons-in-law, but is embarrassed in the respect which it ought to entertain for fathers. All that can be expected of it is that, when it takes part against a ridiculous father, it does not at the same time condemn all fathers, and does not discredit the paternal character itself, in making us laugh at a *Géronte* or a *Harpagon*.

Comedy, accustomed as she is to censure fathers, does still greater injury to the paternal character, when she undertakes to defend it. It is even a bad sign for the paternal authority, when comedy takes its cause in hand: it is usually an indication that the authority has lost its influence. When sophistry begins to shake the authority of fathers and husbands in the world, comedy then gives them an important

place ; the Theatre no longer exhibits any but virtuous and indulgent fathers, who graciously save their sons the trouble of duping them, for they consent to every thing ; or irreproachable husbands, whose misfortunes it is the poet's effort to persuade us to pity, instead of making us laugh at them. It is curious to observe how comedy, which did not fear to attack the paternal authority, when this authority was an indisputable right, treats it with tenderness when it was no longer supported except by worldly proprieties. We often, even in these days, when the idea of duty is changed, hear comedy loudly regretting the severity of the ancient manners. It becomes austere, in order to remain censorious.

In the eighteenth century, the Theatre witnessed, during many years, an affecting procession of virtuous and tender fathers, such as the *Father of a Family* in Diderot, and the father of *Eugenia*, in the drama of Beaumarchais ; excellent people, whom we would love more, if they would say less about their goodness, and whose chagrins we would be more willing to pity, if their grief did not mount upon two points of exclamation, as if upon crutches. "O holy bond of marriage," says the father of a family in Diderot, M. D'Orbesson, "when I think of you, my heart becomes cheered and elevated. O tender names of son and daughter ! I can never pronounce you without leaping with joy, and becoming affected to tears." Well ! we are willing that you should be affected, but say less about it ! It is for us to be moved and affected ; but it is not for you to make a display of your paternal transports. Be a father, like Venceslas, embracing his son when he has just condemned him to death ; be a father like the old Horace or Don Diego : be it in joy or in grief ; but do not practise it before a mirror ; do not talk about the feelings which you experience. Unfortunately, Diderot was a philosopher and a critic, rather than a poet. He made his drama to justify his dramatic theories. His characters do not live ; they are precepts put in action ; they have the secret of all the emotions which they feel, and they, moreover, take great care to tell us of it, so that we may lose nothing of their intentions. The father of a family analyzes and dwells upon his tenderness for his children ; Saint Albin his love for Sophia ; Cecile her love for Germeuil. It is only the commander who naturally bursts out into a fit of anger, and without making any observations about it. Each one in this piece speaks for the

public, and not for his interlocutor ; therefore, the reasons of the characters are arguments drawn from the general state of society, and which are better calculated to please the audience than particular reasons derived from the passions of each individual ; and yet, these passionate reasons are the only good ones, the only ones, indeed, which influence men. What, for example, can we think of a father who gravely says to his daughter, who wishes to retire into a convent, on account of some disappointment in love : “ Who will then re-people society with virtuous citizens, if the women who are most worthy to become mothers of families refuse to do so ? ” This argument of the philosopher, who does not love convents, and which, in its very expression, has something to cause a young girl to blush, would affect her, certainly, much less than a single word of the secret love which she feels for Germeuil. What signify, we may also ask, the constant eulogiums upon virtue and morality with which Diderot and Beaumarchais have interspersed their dramas ? Is it for our instruction ? Useful lessons are only those which are seasonably introduced. But when Lord Clarendon, in the *Eugenia* of Beaumarchais, having been secretly married to Eugenia, and having shamefully deceived her, repents, in the denouement, and returns to his wife, is that the time for a father to think of passing a eulogy upon virtue, and of saying gravely to Eugenia, to Clarendon, and particularly to the audience, “ Never forget that the only solid blessings of life are in the exercise of virtue ? ” Be it so ; but, during the five long acts, you have occupied us with every thing else but the practice of virtue. *Let us frankly confess, that the drama is intended to move, and not to instruct us ; to paint the life of man, such as it is, and not to teach virtue.* But it is this painting of the life and affections of man, it is this truth which is wanting in the dramas of the eighteenth century. In all these dramas, which intended to represent the paternal character on the stage and to make it respectable, Sedaine alone has succeeded, in the drama entitled *The Philosopher without knowing it*, in showing the heart of a father, such as it really is, in its most cruel moments of anxiety.

The drama of the eighteenth century did not know how to represent the paternal character ; it wished to invest it with the dignity which belongs to it, but it fell into stiffness and declamation. When the paternal character goes out of

tragedy, when it aspires to enter the drama, without descending to comedy, it loses its grandeur and its dignity ; it has no longer even that which it had in the world, in the bosom of each family, a sweet and touching gravity. It knows how to be great only at the Theatre, and in tragedy, under the mask of kings and princes. Elsewhere, we do not find it as we imagined it, either in novels or in the drama ; and, as it is not sufficiently idealized, it does not seem to us to resemble it. This necessity of idealizing our sentiments, in order to recognize them, is one of the moral causes of the custom which tragedy has adopted to represent the misfortunes of princes and kings, rather than those of private individuals. The dignity of their rank elevates, in our eyes, their griefs, their anger, and their loves. But so far are their sentiments elevated above, and distinguished from ours, that they enable us only to satisfy the desires of our imagination. We only recognize ourselves in those which are greater and more refined than ourselves.

We may add in passing, that the custom of tragic heroes to speak in verse proceeds from the same cause, poetry being the means of recovering, by grandeur of expression, this grandeur of the human sentiments, which always remains above the efforts of the dramatic poet.

We ought never to mingle the paternal character with events of too trivial a nature, which run the risk of degrading it below the rank to which it belongs. This is the danger of the familiar drama ; without intending it, it debases the paternal character, and although it sincerely respects it, and does not wish to make us laugh at its expense, yet it tends to degrade it by buffoonery and familiarity. Comedy is still more embarrassed ; it lives upon the laughter which ridicule inspires. What would it then do with the paternal character, if it did not wish to jeer openly at the faults of fathers, as the ancient comedy did ? What would it do, especially if it selected a subject where the father played the first part, if it wished to exhibit the ingratitude of children, and their punishment ? A respectable character endangers its success. But of all dangers of this kind, the most perilous is that of a father insulted by his children ; for in that case the laughter would be odious. What then must be done in order to avoid the risk of exciting a laugh against the misfortunes of a father, which would be immoral, or, on the

other hand, of causing us to weep, which would be contrary to the end and intention of comedy? In the seventeenth century, under Moliere, comedy had always, except in the *Tartuffe*, avoided odious subjects. In the eighteenth century, with more boldness, and for want of new inventions, it endeavored to chastise filial ingratitude by ridicule. Piron composed a play entitled, *Ungrateful Sons*. In our own days, Etienne has, with more ability, composed his piece, called *The Two Sons-in-law*. Let us see in what manner these two authors have treated this subject, so difficult for comedy.

An old *fabliau* has furnished Piron and Etienne with the subject of their pieces. A father, blinded by his tenderness for his children, has given them all his property, they agreeing to lodge and support him, each in his turn. Although well treated at first, he soon sees himself neglected and outraged. He goes to tell his chagrin to one of his friends. "Your sons," said his friend to him, who was a rich broker, "your sons have no more regard for you, because they know that you are poor, and have nothing more to leave them. I will have these sacks of *louis d'ors* conveyed to your house; you will take care to count them aloud in your chamber, and permit them to see you, while you seem to conceal them. As soon as they believe that you are rich, your sons will change their conduct towards you." The poor father consented to the trick; and having returned to his chamber, he began to count his gold. The noise of the gold was heard afar off; the sons ran and saw, through the key-hole, their father occupied in heaping up the pieces of money. In the evening they said to him: "My father, what is that you were counting this morning?" "It is a sum which I had invested in commerce, and which has yielded me a large profit, owing to the good care of my banker." "And what are you going to do with it, my father?" "I mean to keep it in my strong box. It is a treasure which I intend to leave to the one with whom I will be most pleased during the remainder of my life." From this day the old man was taken care of, respected, and caressed by his sons, who endeavored to outvie each other in their filial attentions. He died; and his sons, running to the strong box, quickly opened it: it was *empty*! There was only an iron hammer, with a scrap of paper, containing these words: "*I bequeathe this hammer to break the head of the*

father who would be fool enough to give all his property to his children, and to expect their gratitude."

This story is both grave and satirical. We see what Piron has made of it.

The name of Piron scarcely awakens in our mind the idea of a poet, who was able to avenge, even in comedy, the majesty of the paternal character. Piron, however, had some of the qualities requisite to handle such a subject: and when we read his history, we pity him, as one who did not know how to give to his contemporaries, or to posterity, a just idea of his genius, which was better than his works, except the *Metromaniâ*, and his character, which was better than his manner of living. He did not know how to show what he was, and as, on the other hand, he overvalued himself, this good opinion which he had of himself, and which he did not know how to justify in the eyes of others, has made his self-love appear ridiculous, especially in our eyes.

Shall we say, for instance, that during his whole life, Piron believed himself the rival and superior of Voltaire? Voltaire, in his opinion, was a wit;* Piron was a man of genius. This pretension seems inexplicable to us, nowadays; but Piron had witnessed the first attempts of Voltaire, who, notwithstanding the tragic genius which burst forth in his *Œdipus*, had, particularly in the beginning, acquired reputation for wit. Wit, in fact, was the most striking trait of Voltaire's mind; but to a certain degree, wit is a sign of genius, and this is what the early contemporaries of Voltaire did not see. In order to overcome prejudices of this kind, and finally to control the spirit of his age, as he did, a long life was necessary to Voltaire. At his debut, the brilliancy of his wit concealed, if we may so speak, the strength and grandeur of his genius.

Some particular circumstances also explain Piron's opinion. Piron and Voltaire met when they were young at the house of the Marchioness de Mimeure, who loved and protected letters. Voltaire, at the house of Madame de Mimeure, had not only the air of an author; he had already acquired this tone of equality for which literature is under obligations

* En deux mots, voulez-vous distinguer et connaître
Le rimeur dijonnais et le parisien ?
Le premier ne fut rien, ni ne voulut rien être :
L'autre voulut tout être et ne fut presque rien,

to him, for having been the first who knew how to assume it among people of equality. But like many other advocates of equality, he loved it among his superiors, and practised it less among his equals. He treated Piron with hauteur and disdain. Piron, who had the gift of repartee,* availed himself of it to defend himself; he even knew how to put the laugh on his side, which made Voltaire avoid meeting him ever afterwards. But the recollection of the little triumphs which he gained over Voltaire, induced him to make a bad use of his superiority. It is thus that, after the failure of his *Ferdinand Cortez*, the comedians urged him to make corrections, and citing to him the example of Voltaire, who corrected and even altered sometimes entire acts: "Parbleu, sirs, I have no doubt of it," says Piron, "he works in plaster; I cast in bronze."

In addition to this rivalry with Voltaire, we may add the difference of parties. Voltaire was at the head of the Encyclopedist party; Piron detested the Encyclopedists. Piron belongs to the school of the eighteenth century, which we endeavored to describe in speaking of Collé; he was a jester and not an innovator; literature in his eyes was intended rather to amuse society, than to instruct and govern it. He is only a man of letters, and moreover he retained the old familiar manners. We will observe in passing, these two traits of the character of Piron.

His father was celebrated for the charming Christmas songs which he composed in the vulgar *patois*. The young Piron, educated with a taste for letters, began to write verses at an early period, and inspired brilliant hopes in the good opinion of the poets. He himself relates in a spirited manner, in the preface of his *Metromaniâ*, that one of his classmates, an amiable and good-looking young man, having his imagination excited by reading the Iliad, the Æneid, and our marvellous romancers, enrolled himself at the age of fifteen

* We will cite one of the thousand of Piron's repartees. In returning from the rehearsal of his *Metromaniâ*, Piron, as was his custom, entered the Café Procope. He had on a magnificent laced coat. It was not usual to see him so splendidly attired. Every body pressed around him and complimented him. The Abbé Desfontaines was present. He wished to excite a laugh against Piron, and raising with affected curiosity and feigned admiration, the skirt of his coat, "What a dress," he exclaimed, "for such a man;" to which Piron immediately replied, in lifting the Abbé's surplice, "And what a man for such a dress."

years, in a company of dragoons. "I had only twelve or thirteen years," continues Piron, "and I was yet in my first enthusiasm, when this young man was yet full of his own.—'Adieu, my friend,' said he to me, with the air of an Artaban. 'I will lose my life, or I will make you see how high a young soldier can rise.' He was certain that he already held his sword and the baton of Marshal Fabert in the same scabbard. 'Courage,' replied I, with the same tone. 'I too will lose my Latin, or I will reap as fine laurels as you. Return an Achilles, and be sure of finding in me a Homer who will celebrate your glory as it deserves.' Such were our heroic adieus. We parted, and afterwards both of us nearly attained our object: the poor lad with forty years more and one arm less, died in the Hospital of the Invalids."

Piron composed his *Metromaniâ*, when he described in beautiful verses, the charm of those literary illusions which he knew to be false, and which nevertheless he always loved. Never was a subject better adapted to the taste of Piron, than *Metromaniâ*; for in taking the Metromaniac for his hero, he was relating his own history, and told it with the happiest mixture of enthusiasm and experience; the enthusiasm which he formerly felt for literature, and the remembrance of which still inspired him, and the experience which he acquired by forty years of literary life.

The second trait of the character of Piron, which we propose to show, is this taste for the ancient manners and the old household virtues, which he always preserved, without, unfortunately, ever practising them himself; and which we admire so much the more in him, as they proceeded from the pious affection which he entertained for his parents. He speaks of them and of their virtues with touching emotion.*

Piron, in this respect, was then worthy to take in hand the cause of fathers who were outraged by their children, and the subject of ungrateful children was congenial with his disposition. Unfortunately, he did not know how to make his subject interesting by meditation. He was particularly distinguished for his impromptus, and was always more of an

* "They were those good old French people, who, if any of them still exist, are the laughing stock of the polite world; we mean those good souls, who, become as rare as they are ridiculous, are a hundred times more occupied with their salvation and that of their family, than everything which is here below called by the name of glory and fortune."

improvisator than a poet ; for labor added nothing to his thoughts, and his first impulse was always the best. His comedies were therefore insipid and commonplace. His fathers interest but little, and his sons are displeasing ; they do not go so far as to become odious, which would place them out of the sphere of comedy ; but they are ridiculous only on account of their silliness, while they ought to be so for their ingratitude. Let us justify this judgment by a short analysis of the piece of Piron.

The three sons of Geronte, spoiled by him when they were young, and invested with all his property as soon as they had attained manhood, neglect and despise their father and benefactor. Piron explains very well why Geronte has lost the respect of his sons : he has, says Chrysalde, in verses, not so good as the thoughts which they express, he has changed,

by a pitiable weakness,
Paternal love into puerile friendship ;—

Act i. scene 1.

a great error, which for a long while obtained credence in the world. How often have we heard it said, that a father ought to be the companion of his son ! This maxim, which passed for wise and sentimental, was by this double title rendered dear to the philosophy of the eighteenth century. In our opinion, paternal and filial love are sentiments which gain nothing by changing their name, and especially their nature : friendship cannot be substituted for the affection which binds together the father and his children, for it is the nature of this affection to exclude equality, which is the basis and the foundation of friendship. The father who endeavors to become the companion of his son, lowers the dignity of his character, and that, without any advantage to himself : for he in vain attempts to affect youthfulness when he is old ; he in vain affects familiarity when he is a father and feels his authority ; his age and his authority appear through his feigned familiarity ; and the son is soon tired of a companion, who has neither the tastes nor the natural sympathies of youth : he could support paternal gravity ; but the mask which he has assumed, in order to succeed, has discredited him. Let fathers aim at being loved as fathers, and not as companions ; let them conduct themselves in conformity with

the order of nature, and not endeavor to correct it by the light of a false philosophy ; let them not endeavor to make themselves young against their will, or to make their sons old prematurely, for this kind of dissembling is still worse. The father who makes himself young to please his son, is only ridiculous ; but the son who makes himself old, becomes hypocritical.

The habits of the life of old men do not suit young people. We have often seen those sons, who lived, they said, as friends, separate in irreconcilable enmity. The idyll ended with a suit.

The sons of Geronte do not bring a suit against their father, for they have taken every thing from him ; they live in affluence, while he lives in great poverty, which, above all, displeases his valet Pasquin. Pasquin, therefore, with his father Gregoire, the farmer of Geronte, one of those morose, cunning peasants, who preserve their simplicity for the purpose of deceiving country folks, (and Piron deserved to be considered one of the first who introduced this kind of character on the stage,) Pasquin contrives a trick to deceive the three ungrateful sons, and to make them restore to their father the property which he had given them. This trick is the same as that of the fabliau ; with a bag of silver, which he carries to Geronte, Gregoire induces the three sons to believe that their father has still a hundred thousand livres to divide among them : but it is required that they should prove their affection for him, and he persuades them, by degrees, to return to their father the property which they obtained from him.

The folly of the three sons of Geronte, who are puppets rather than characters, is the principal fault of Piron's piece. The action revolves around them, but they do not create it ; and we are astonished in reading this comedy, entitled *The Ungrateful Sons*, to see that the chief personages are, the valet Pasquin, the farmer Gregoire, and the waitingmaid Nerine. They are those secondary or subordinate personages who fill up the scene. The accessory covers the principal, and we have, so to speak, a comedy of convention, rather than a comedy of character.

The weakness of fathers, rather than the ingratitude of children, is the true subject of Piron's piece ; and Piron gave to his work a more appropriate title, when, in the second edition, he called it *The School of Fathers*. In fact, the

ungrateful sons are disgraced by their indulgent father. A father ought never to give all of his property to his children, because they despise him as soon as they have nothing more to expect from him: such is the morality of the old fabliau, and it is also the instructive lesson which the ancient story teaches. It is addressed more to fathers than to children, rather to the discretion of parents than to the ingratitude of children.

The morality of the old fabliau is also perceived in the *Two Sons-in-law* of Etienne; but the author has endeavored to correct it. Dupré, like Geronte, has disposed of his property to his two sons-in-law; but he repents of this weakness, and extenuates his folly by apologizing to his old friend Frémont. He does not possess the gentleness of Geronte, who is obstinate in believing in the virtues of his children. It is true that it is more easy, we confess, to be angry with sons-in-law than with sons. The majesty of the paternal character, which Piron had degraded in his *Ungrateful Sons*, is redeemed in the *Two Sons-in-law*, and retrieved without exhibiting any foolish pride. Dupré has the principal character: for he is neither weak, nor a dupe: and even in the denouement, the spectator laughs heartily at the disappointment of the two sons-in-law, when, having restored to their father-in-law his donations, with a secret hope that he would not accept them, the latter says to them: "I wish in my turn, to show myself generous: it is not my property which will render me happy; with an indifferent eye, alas! I regard it; but you return it to me, my children: I will keep it, and henceforth, I only wish to control the use of it. I will live with you, and you will lodge with me."

Another merit of Etienne lies in his having caused the interest of his piece to arise from the character of the two sons-in-law, rather than from the conduct of the subordinate personages, as in the *Ungrateful Sons* of Piron.

The two sons-in-law of Dupré, Dervière and Dalainville, aim at the same object by different means; they wish to obtain consideration and credit, in order to acquire honor and emoluments. One becomes a philanthropist, and the other a statesman, or rather a great administrator: for under the Empire, there was scarcely any career for the ambition of statesmen; but they aimed at obtaining the reputation of great men of business, and in order to get this name,

they courted the opinion of the world. In France, before the reign of public opinion, the opinion of the world prevailed; before the elections they had the drawing-room. Hence, for the ambitious or the vain of all times, the necessity was greater in France than elsewhere, to make us believe in their virtues or their talents. The art of that consists chiefly in avoiding scandal and ridicule. It is that to which the two sons-in-law of Dupré particularly applied themselves, and they believed that they had succeeded. But it happened to them as it often happened to political men: they thought of every thing that was remote, and forgot what was near at hand; they have succeeded with extreme attention in managing the public, but they have neglected and maltreated their father; they put themselves on their guard against the scandal and ridicule of every one except that of their family, because they believed that they had nothing to fear from that quarter; and it is for that they have been wounded, it is for that they are made ridiculous and odious; all to the great joy of the spectators, who laugh at seeing them punished for the very cause of their transgression. In this consists the whole art of comedy.

Dalainville is about to be appointed a minister. It is much talked of; as is usually the case, he believes it the more they talk of it. His brother-in-law, Dervière, who hates him, has even complimented him on the subject. Madame Dalainville does not enjoy less than her husband his expected promotion: in this office she sees beautiful equipages, valets, coachmen, running footmen, and all the retinue of people of quality, which is as pleasing to her vanity as to her husband's ambition. At this moment, a letter is received from M. Dupré, who announces to his two sons-in-law that their conduct has compelled him to estrange himself forever; that he had fortunately obtained resources which would render him independent, and that their conduct would soon be made known to all the world. This letter, and especially this last word, struck terror into the hearts of the two sons-in-law, and a terror worthy of comedy, which amuses us at the same time that it makes us laugh. The mutual reproaches which they address to each other, cause the dread which they have of seeing their offences made known, to appear in the most striking manner. Take care, said the philanthropist to the future minister;

All eyes seem now to be fixed on you ;
 Your elevation has made them very jealous,
 You see that for them the occasion is fine :
 This will be the news to-morrow through all Paris.
 At the words of an ungrateful son, of an abandoned father,
 I believe I see the public incensed against you.
 To the man who becomes elevated, it is unmerciful :
 The multitude of the wicked, as you well know,
 Will say that a bad son is a bad citizen.

Dalainville. What !

Dervière. Do not fear that they will sacrifice you ;
 You are without reproach, and they calumniate you.
 But in the eyes of the public, it would be
 Better to be a little more culpable, and less innocent.

We see how *Dervière* finds a sort of pleasure in foretelling to *Dalainville* all the malicious talk that the public have against him ; *Dalainville*, in his turn, does not fail to take his revenge against the philanthropist.

If I ought to dread the injustice of the public,
 It can also exercise its malice upon you.
 There, they will say, is the benevolent mortal,
 Prop of the unfortunate, support of the indigent ;
 He filled the earth with his numerous benefits :
 He was kind to every one, except his father.

Dervière. Will they thus dare to falsify the truth ?

Dalainville. Yes, you are right, it is an indignity ;
 But as you will say, it would be preferable
 That the thing should be true, but not appear so.

Finally, as in this piece, each person must be punished for his fault by his accomplice, and it is the justness of the comedy that *Madame Dalainville*, this frivolous woman who forgot her father for the world, should also be reproached for her wrongs by her husband :

. . . Do not accuse others,
 For the greatest wrongs, madame, are yours.
 Were you not the support and hope of a father ?
 Who then, if not you, ought to watch over him ?
 Oppressed with labor, was it my duty, madame,
 To give to him the time which the public demands ?
 Ah ! must they, with cares so tender and sweet,
 Ever be fulfilled by others than you ?
 But the eclat of your grandeurs has turned your head,
 And you dream only of spectacles and fêtes :

Forgetting your friends and your poor parents,
 You seem to be able to live only with the great ;
 And you would doubtless believe that you are imitating the vulgar
 If you remembered that you had a father.

Act iii. scene 8.

The harsh truth of these reproaches overwhelms Madame Dalainville, who is ready to faint : and here is the moral punishment of the ambitious, and a comical punishment : he has the great world at his house, and his wife, who must do the honors to this frivolous and wicked company, his wife begins to weep ! What would one think of it ! What does he say ?

. Dry your tears ;
 It is very essential, I warn you :
 Those who dine with me are not my friends.

Act iii. scene 8.

This intrigue and this dialogue are excellent. They naturally arise from the different passions which animate the personages, and from the fault which they have committed. We well know that we may say that these passions do not spring from ingratitude : it is ambition, charlatanism, or vanity. It is not ingratitude, but they are all intimately connected with it. The true ingrate—that is to say, the man who feels pleasure in returning evil for good—is rare and monstrous, and moreover, would be scarcely tolerated at the Theatre in tragedy. But this ingratitude which proceeds from selfishness, and which is only the preference which man has for himself over his benefactor ; this ingratitude which has a little corner in all hearts, is put in comedy because it is not necessarily odious. Such is the ingratitude of the two sons-in-law : they are more selfish than ungrateful.

We have remarked the kind of morality which the story illustrates. This story takes the side of fathers ; but it does so because the father, after the first moment of wickedness, had the intention of duping the hypocrites ; and the story seems especially to put an end to this narrative. It would be an error, however, to believe that such is the general character of the literature of the middle ages, and that in the tales or romances of chivalry, the fathers have not the dignity and authority which they ought to have. On the contrary, there is in these old fabliaux a great respect for the sentiments and natural duties of man : the paternal character is there every where honored ; filial piety is there every where commended

and rewarded. Never, in the romances of chivalry, are fathers ridiculous; never are the sons insolent and disrespectful. The events are often strange and fabulous, but the sentiments are always true, and of a noble and elevated character. In these narratives, which are a faithful picture of the manners of the feudal society, kings are sometimes treated with little consideration, and the great Charlemagne is not always painted in favorable colors: he is impatient and quarrelsome; he is inclined to anger and suspicion; and is even sometimes represented as having been insulted and beaten by his vassals. But there is, above royal majesty, another majesty more inviolable and more sacred: it is that of paternal authority, which no son would dare to outrage with impunity, were he even to become a greater proprietor than his father. And we may add, as a last trait, that, in these romances, the paternal power is conscious of its dignity, and that it never lowers itself for a moment, even for love. "My Lord," says his wife, Mabilette, to the old Chevalier Guérin de Montglave, "our four sons will return to see us to-day. You have told them to go and seek their fortunes in the world; they have obeyed you, and they are now dukes, counts, and great barons, having under their banners many men-at-arms, and in their dungeons a quantity of gold and silver. Let us hasten to meet them at the gate of the city of Bordeaux, that we may the sooner see and embrace them." "My Lady," replied Guérin de Montglave, "our children do their duty in coming to see us, and I have hastened to embrace them; but I do not wish to deprive them of the honor of rendering to us all the homage which they will also receive one day from their own children. Let us await them. Only come with me to this window, that you may see them coming afar off."

We see in what a touching and natural manner the sentiments of paternal and maternal love are expressed in the literature of the middle ages: the mother thinks of embracing her children soonest; the father, without loving them less, thinks of the respect which they owe him, and, to reconcile his dignity and tenderness, goes to place himself at the window, to see them while they are yet afar off.

XIII.

OF FATHERS IN COMEDY, AND ESPECIALLY IN THE COMEDIES OF MOLIERE.

COMEDY is embarrassed, when it wishes to defend fathers; it is less restrained when it attacks them; but it meets on this side a dangerous rock: it runs the risk of becoming immoral, and it is this which caused J. J. Rousseau to censure comedy, and especially the comedies of Moliere:

"It is assuredly a great vice," (says he in his letter on theatrical exhibitions,) "to be avaricious, and to lend money on usury; but is it not a still greater vice for a son to rob his father, to be disrespectful to him, to make insulting reproaches to him; and when this angry father gives him his malediction, to answer with a grumbling air, that he cares nothing about his gifts? If this pleasantry is excellent, is it less punishable on that account? And is the piece in which they make us love the insolent son who has made it, less a school of bad manners?"

In the eighteenth century, J. J. Rousseau attacked comedy, and censured it for teaching children the forgetfulness of the respect which they owe to their parents, as Aristophanes in former times, in *The Clouds*,* accused philosophy of perverting the minds of the young, and weakening the authority of paternal power in their hearts. And it is thus that comedy and philosophy, the two most reckless arts in the world, the one by raillery, and the other by suggesting doubt, have in their disputations alternately recognized and denounced each other, for violating the sacredness of the paternal power, which lies at the foundation of society.

* See in *The Clouds*, the scene where Phidippides beats Strepsiades, his father, and demonstrates to him, by the aid of the principles of Socrates, that he has a right to beat him.

Before Rousseau, Bossuet and Nicole had spoken of the Theatre in the same manner; and before Bossuet and Nicole, Saint Chrysostom had condemned it. Shall we attempt to protest against this anathema? Shall we endeavor to maintain, as the philosophers of the eighteenth century did, that the Theatre is a school of morality? No: let us recognize the evil where it lies; but let us so measure it that it may not appear to be greater than it is. We will not extol the stage, but we will only condemn it for the faults which belong to it. We ought not to expect of it the purity of Christian morality; whoever wishes that, must go to seek it at the Church. Nor ought we to ask of it the severe and high-toned morality of the Porch; nor should we even expect of it the virtuous hatred which the sight of evil gives to good people: it rather takes the part of Philente, who quietly takes men as he finds them, than the part of Alceste. Let us not believe, however, that the drama is, of all the kinds of literature, the most destitute of morality. The mirror of human life, the Theatre, is as moral as our experience; and we may add, alas! to disguise nothing of its inefficacy, as moral as the experience of others, which avail but little in producing a reform.

We will consider in another place what are the dangers of the Theatre in a moral point of view. We wish at present only to ascertain if it is true that Moliere, in his comedies, wished to weaken paternal authority. We will remark first, that the fathers, husbands, and old men whom Moliere makes game of, are not ridiculous in their character of father, husband, and old man, but for the vices and the passions which dishonor in them this very character. In the *School for Husbands*, Sganarelle is ridiculous, not because he is old, but because being old, he is amorous, and a cold and morose lover, which is contrary to the character of love. And it is so true that Sganarelle is not ridiculous on account of his age, but on account of his faults, that on the side of him is Aristippe, his brother, old also and amorous, but amiable and indulgent, who is the hero of the piece, and whom the young Leonora willingly marries. It is not old age that Moliere ridicules, but the faults which dishonor it. We cannot say as much for Arnolfe in the *School for Wives*: he is not ridiculous because he is old, but because he is captious and jealous. George Dandin is not ridiculous because he is married, but because he has made a marriage of vanity, and he pays

the penalty of his pride. Harpagon, in fine, amuses us not as a father, but because he is avaricious; and if his son is wanting in respect for him, it is because the miser, the usurer, and the amorous old man, the three vices, or the three ridiculous qualities in Harpagon, conceal the paternal character.

Comedy, in causing the vices to punish each other, represents the justice of the world as it is; a justice which is accomplished by the aid of the human passions which contend with each other, and alternately obtain the mastery. It is this justice which the proverbs also express, which are only comic ideas recapitulated in maxims, when they say, for example: *to the avaricious wife, a gallant sharper*. When the passions are strong and violent, this justice is terrible, and creates the emotion of tragedy; when the passions are more insignificant and trivial, this justice is jocose and humorous; it then creates the ridicule of comedy.

An attentive study of the parts of father and son, of Harpagon and Cleanthe, in *The Miser*, will justify these reflections.

If we wished in a sermon, to describe avarice, and to render it odious, if we said that this passion made us forget every thing, honor, friendship, and family; that the miser prefers his gold to his children; that if they were reduced by the avarice of their father to the greatest extremities, they would very soon cease to respect him, and that this revolt of the children is the chastisement of the avarice of the father; if we said all that in a sermon, who would be astonished? Who would think of pretending to say, that in speaking thus, we encourage children to forget the respect which they owe to their parents? Moliere, in the scene of *The Miser*, which J. J. Rousseau censures, has only put in action this sermon which we have imagined. When the father forgets his honor, the son forgets the respect which he owes to his father. We are not in fact deceived: a glorious title is that of a father of a family; it is almost that of a priest; but it is a title which obliges, and if it gives rights, it also imposes duties. We know well that a son should never accuse his father, even though he should be culpable; that is the precept, but it is, alas! the practice only of virtuous sons. But Moliere, in *The Miser*, did not at all intend to represent Cleanthe as a virtuous son, whom we must approve at the expense of his father; he only wished to oppose avarice to prodigality, because these

are the two vices which, contrasting most strongly, can, for that very reason, conflict with each other, and punish each other most effectually.

Another art of comedy consists, while causing the passions to combat each other, in preventing the shock from being too violent; which would turn it into tragedy. In *The Miser*, Moliere has avoided this rock in an admirable manner; and it is the more remarkable, since he always keeps near to it. See the scene in which Cleanthe, expecting a usurer, recognized his father: what an unexpected surprise, and how easy it would have been to fall into grand sentiments! Suppose a sententious or sentimental son, or rather, suppose a son who has not his faults, and who should not be, like his father, taken in *flagrante delictu*: what a fine opportunity for an inferior to teach lessons to a superior, which pleases so much nowadays! In Moliere, we see nothing of the kind: the situation is peculiar, but it remains comic; every thing is said, but always in the tone of comedy.

Harpagon. How, villain! It is you who have abandoned yourself to these culpable extremities?

Cleanthe. How, my father! Is it you who commit such shameful actions?

Harpagon. It is you who wish to ruin yourself by such extravagant loans!

Cleanthe. It is you who seek to enrich yourself by such criminal usuries!

Harpagon. Do you then dare, after that, to appear before me?

Cleanthe. Do you then dare, after that, to show yourself before the world?

Harpagon. Tell me, are you not ashamed to enter into such debauches, to involve yourself in such frightful expenses, and to dissipate the property which your parents have earned with so much labor?

Cleanthe. Do you not blush to dishonor your condition by the traffic which you have made; to sacrifice glory and reputation to the insatiable desire of hoarding up money, and to increase its interest, by using the most infamous arts which the most notorious usurers have ever invented?

Act ii. scenes 2 and 3.

In this scene, what makes the comedy, is that both of them accuse each other; Harpagon accuses Cleanthe, and Cleanthe accuses Harpagon. But the little respect which we have for Cleanthe, saves the paternal authority from the re-

proaches which it would have received. If Cleanthe, instead of being a prodigal and a libertine, was a virtuous and prudent son; if, as in the melodramas of our days, Moliere, opposing virtue to vice, had made a hoary-headed moralist of the son of Harpagon; if, in a word, we had been able to take seriously the reproaches which he casts upon his father, instead of laughing alternately at that passion which rebukes the other, the scene would have been more dangerous for the paternal authority: the serious would have destroyed all; the laugh saves all.

The examination, in another scene of *The Miser*, and it is that which J. J. Rousseau has attacked most violently, will still better explain what we mean. We refer to the scene in which Harpagon announces to his son, that he wishes to give him Marianne for a wife, and makes him confess that he has loved her for a long time; then, after having obtained this confession, gives him to understand that he must renounce his love: for Marianne will be his mother-in-law, and not his wife.

We know that Mithridates, wishing to tear from Monime the confession of the love which she has for Xiphares, employs the same expedient as Harpagon: he makes her believe also, that he wishes to give her Xiphares for a husband; and when she has confessed to the King that she has loved Xiphares for a long time, he orders her to forget him. It is curious to see Harpagon and Mithridates, comedy and tragedy, employ the same expedient, and bring about the same revolt.

Harpagon. So you have no inclination, then, for Marianne?

Cleanthe. None at all.

Harpagon. I regret it, for that banishes a thought which had come into my mind. I have made, in seeing her here, a reflection upon my age, and have thought that they would blame me for marrying so young a person. This consideration has made me abandon the intention; and, as I have demanded her, and have pledged my word to her, I would have given her to you, were it not for the aversion which you show for her.

Cleanthe. To me?

Harpagon. To you.

Cleanthe. In marriage?

Harpagon. In marriage.

Cleanthe. Hear me. It is true that she is not very much to my taste; but, to do you a pleasure, my father, I will consent to marry her, if you desire it.

Harpagon. Me! Yes, I am more reasonable than you think. I do not wish to force your inclination

Cleanthe. Well! my father, since things are so, it is necessary that you should know my heart; it is necessary to reveal our secret to you. The truth is, I loved her since the day that I met her in a promenade; my intention was to demand her of you as my wife, and nothing has prevented me but the declaration of your sentiments, and the fear of displeasing you.

Act iv. scene 3.

When Harpagon tells Cleanthe that he must renounce his love for Marianne, he resists his father; but the vivacity of the scene does not go out of the tone of comedy.

Cleanthe. Yes, my father, it is thus that you trifle with me! Ah well! Since things have come to that, I declare to you, that I will not give up the passion which I have for Marianne: there is no extremity to which I would not resort in order to dispute her conquest with you; and if you have, for yourself, the consent of a mother, I will have friends who will combat for me!

Harpagon. How, villain! Have you the audacity to oppose me?

Cleanthe. It is you who oppose me; I have a prior claim.

Harpagon. Am I not your father, and do you not owe me respect?

Cleanthe. These are not matters in which children are obliged to yield to parents, and love knows nobody.

Harpagon. I will make you know me, by beating you with my cane.

Cleanthe. All your threats will not affect me.

Harpagon. Leave me, traitor!

Cleanthe. Do just what you please.

Harpagon. I forbid you to see me again.

Cleanthe. Be it so.

Harpagon. I abandon you.

Cleanthe. Abandon.

Harpagon. I renounce you for my son.

Cleanthe. Be it so.

Harpagon. I disinherit you.

Cleanthe. Do all that you please.

Harpagon. And I give you my malediction.

Cleanthe. I care nothing about your gifts.

Act iv. scenes 3 and 5.

Has Harpagon the right to curse his son, after having trifled with him as he has done? A grave question, which comedy is careful about resolving, or even proposing; and it is for this reason that it is occupied in laughing, which is

less dangerous than the serious. It remains faithful to the rules of its art, in avoiding the tone of tragedy, although it approaches it very near; and, at the same time, it is more moral. It is upon this point that we insist, and, for that purpose, we will take the liberty of making a supposition. We will suppose that, in our days, an author has to treat of the situation which Moliere has invented in *The Miser*. A father wishes to marry a young girl, who is also loved by his son; he suspects the love of his son, and, by some contrivance, he obtains his son's confession; and, when he has made this confession, he orders him to renounce his love. The situation is piquant and dramatic; it may become terrible. The modern author would not fail, in such a subject, to aim at creating serious emotions; he would not fail to declaim loudly against paternal tyranny: "Paternal authority!" the Cleanthe of the modern drama would exclaim, "but do you believe, then, that it must extinguish the rights of love and nature? Ah! my father, I beg you, do not compel me to disobey you: I will do it!" To which, we imagine, that the father would reply by a romantic and sentimental tirade, not wishing, perhaps, to pride himself too much upon his paternal authority, which would be in bad taste, according to our ideas: "Ah! why should I not love this young girl? Does the heart grow old? My soul becomes young when my eyes behold her," &c.

Cleanthe (walking with long strides across the stage). My father! My father! . . . Take care, I still repeat these sacred words; but I begin no longer to understand the sense of them!

Father. And me! What signifies this name of son? . . . *Son!* *Son!* What does that mean? Ah! a rival rather! That is the word which I understand and hate.

Son. Ah, well then, rival! I am your rival, and wish to be! I take this young girl for my wife, while you are present, my father; do you understand? Oh, it shall not be said that my father has not been present at my marriage!

Father. Wretch! I curse you!

Son (gravely). You have no right to do it. *To curse!* Is that the duty of a father? You are my rival. *To curse!* Is that the duty of a priest; but where are the signs of priesthood, the passions conquered and anger subdued? You are neither father nor priest. (*With solemnity*) I do not accept your malediction!

This, in the style of the modern drama, is the interpretation of the phrase: "I care nothing about your gifts."

Which of these two expressions is the most corrupting? Which is the one that brings most into dispute the mystery of the paternal authority? The serious of the drama is so much the more dangerous, as it corrupts the understanding, by sophistry, and the heart by emotion. Comedy jokes, the drama reasons; comedy touches casually the delicate idea of the limits of paternal power, and the rights, always specious, of love. The drama stops with the design: it loves to develope this point, which touches all the passions, for all love revolt. Let us not say, then, with J. J. Rousseau, that the comedy of Moliere is a school of depravity. It is bad comedy and the drama which deform the heart, because they pretend to preach and to instruct; because they enervate the soul by sentimentality, and corrupt the mind by sophistry. Good comedy amuses at the expense of the vices which it places in opposition to each other; but it does not recommend or extol any of them.

XIV.

OF MATERNAL LOVE.—ANDROMACHE IN HOMER, IN EURIPIDES, AND
RACINE.

WE have considered the different expressions of paternal love, and have seen how this sentiment has by degrees become less pure and elevated, under the pretext of becoming more tender and passionate. We have seen how paternal tenderness in the dramas of the eighteenth century, has taken the tone of sensibility, and commenced to become materialized, until in our days it has degenerated into a kind of instinct in the *Triboulet* of Victor Hugo, and into a sort of monomania in the *Father Goriot* of De Balzac.

We propose to make similar reflections upon maternal love. We wish to show this sentiment, represented first with all the purity, and all the energy which belong to it, then by degrees becoming exaggerated in such a manner as to be no more than a blind and violent affection, which seems to have lost that delicacy of emotion, which is peculiar to maternal tenderness.

We will take for the first subject of the remarks which we propose to make, the character of Andromache ; because the character of Andromache, painted by the three great masters of the art, Homer, Euripides, and Racine, enables us to see how maternal love changes its expression, according to times, without changing its basis.

One of the charms of the antique literature, is what we may with propriety denominate, the stability of their characters. Their characters are consecrated by tradition, and it is not lawful to alter them. Phædra, Clytemnestra, Hecuba, Medea, Penelope, Andromache, are the invariable models which their poets reproduce with fidelity ; the most they can do is to make one of the features of these traditional

countenances stand out in bolder relief than another. This is all the difference. We might almost say, if we did not fear to make too profane an approximation, that they are in this respect heroic personages of the antique poetry, like the divine and sacred personages in modern painting. The countenances of the Saviour, of the Virgin, of St. John the Baptist, and the chief Apostles, are countenances consecrated by tradition, and which the painters are careful about altering. Each one only gives them an expression, and a particular countenance: it is in this that consists the originality of the painter. For our part, we are persuaded that the respect for the consecrated models, far from restraining the antique poets and painters of modern times, has aided their genius; for their imagination, restrained by this fundamental law of the art, is applied entirely to the expression of the characters and countenances. They aimed at the beautiful rather than the new.

In Homer, Andromache is the model of conjugal and maternal love; she is the wife and mother, such as antiquity conceived it; modest, reserved, faithful to the domestic roof and to the labors of her sex, loving her husband with an admirable mixture of ardor and respect, and her son with a profound and sweet tenderness, mingled, in Andromache, with sad and gloomy presentiments, which were unfortunately too soon fulfilled. See this beautiful scene of the parting, when Hector is about to go to combat the Greeks. It is not yet his last and fatal combat with Achilles; but what grief already, and what tenderness, in the adieus of Andromache!

“Hector was about to leave the gates of Scea, when Andromache advanced to meet him; behind her walked a slave, who carried in her arms his son Astyanax. On seeing his son, Hector calmly smiled, but said nothing. Andromache then took his hand, and said weeping: ‘Hector, your rashness will be your destruction, and you do not take pity upon your son, who is in the cradle, and upon me, who will soon become your disconsolate widow; for the Greeks will kill you by all uniting against you.—Alas! when I will have lost you, it will be better that I should die myself. I have no other joy and consolation but you, and if you at last meet your fate, I will have nothing but sorrow to expect, after you are gone. I have, as you .

know, neither father nor mother. Achilles has killed my father, and ruined my country ; I had seven brothers, who were the pride of my father's house, all of whom perished on the same day, and always under the strokes of Achilles ; my mother, also, has in her turn fallen by the arrows of Diana. Hector, you are my father, my mother, my brothers ; you are my husband, and the companion of my bed. I beg you, take pity upon me ; do not make your son an orphan, and your wife a widow ! Assemble the army near this wild fig-tree ; for it is at that point that the city is accessible, and the wall can be scaled ; it is there you must remain to defend Troy ; for three times already have the most valiant of the Greeks made an effort on this side, the two Ajax, the brave Idomeneus, the two sons of Atreus, and the valiant sons of Tydides, either because a deity had directed them to this spot, or that their courage and their skill impelled them there.' Hector replied : ' Yes, I will take care to defend the city on this side ; but do not try to retain me. What would the Trojans, and even the long-robed matrons of Troy, say, if they were to see me basely withdraw from the combat ? My heart has not the desire of flight, for I have always braved the perils, and combatted among the first of the Trojans, to defend the glory of my father, and my own. My soul well knows that there will come a day, when will perish the sacred city of Troy and Priam, and the people of Priam. But believe me, I pity the fate of the Trojans, of Hecuba, of Priam, and of my brothers, so numerous and so brave—all of whom will be levelled with the dust, under the strokes of the enemy. It is upon you, especially, Andromache, that I take pity, when I think that some warrior of Argos will seize you weeping and trembling, and lead you captive into his country, and that you will be compelled to weave cloth under the orders of a mistress, or go to bring water from the public fountains, suffering and indignant, but forced to yield to the hard necessity ; and then seeing you pass all in tears, they will say, ' There is the wife of Hector, who knew so well how to fight among the Trojans, when the Greeks besieged Troy.' It is thus they will say as you pass by, and it will be to you a new chagrin, when you think of the husband you will have lost, and who could have kept far from you the day of servitude. Ah ! may I be dead, and the earth heaped over me, before I hear your groans and see your servitude.' "

Then comes this touching scene, where Hector wishes to take his son in his arms, and the child, frightened by the helmet of his father, throws himself upon the bosom of his nurse. Hector puts his helmet on the ground, takes the child, and prays Jupiter that he will permit Astyanax to reign over Troy, and surpass the glory of his father; a touching consolation addressed to Andromache, and which alleviates the inquietudes of the wife, by raising the hopes of the mother. Then he places Astyanax in the arms of Andromache, who receives him, smiling and weeping at the same time. These tears and this smile touch Hector; he regards Andromache with a look full of pity and love, and taking her by the hand, he addresses to her these beautiful and solemn words, which are full of the genius of the East and of antiquity; we mean this religious respect for destiny, which almost resembles Christian resignation: "Andromache, do not accuse me in your heart, and do not complain before there is occasion for it. No warrior, you know, can descend to the tomb, before the day which has been fixed by fate; and no one, be he brave or cowardly, from the time that he is born, can avoid his destiny. Return then to your house; apportion to your slaves their daily labor at the spindle and the distaff; overlook their work; and all of us warriors who were born in Troy, and I especially, will attend to the affairs of war."

Thus we see that resignation and domestic cares are the last consolations, which Hector addresses to Andromache, and which may shock the sensibility of our age, but which are, alas! the only effective consolations to calm the disquietude of the soul. Since Homer, man has not invented others.

In this scene of their parting farewell, maternal love is displayed in a touching manner, although conjugal love retains the mastery as it ought to do. But when her husband is dead, when his corpse, redeemed by Priam, returns to Troy, we hear the lamentations of Andromache, and see how the sorrow which she feels for her son, renders still more terrific the loss of her Hector; how, in a word, maternal love is naturally mingled with her sorrows of widowhood, and keeps them in subjection. Her son an orphan, her son without a protector, her son exposed to the anger of the enraged Greeks, are the ideas and sentiments which continually return to her mind in the midst of her tears: "O my Hector,

how young you were to die ! and you have left me a widow in this palace, and your son an orphan, and who will not reach the age of manhood ; for before that time this city will be overturned, while you have perished, you who defended it, you who saved its women and children inclosed within its walls. Now these women will be led captive into the vessels of the Greeks, and myself with them. And you, my son, will follow me, condemned to work like a slave under the authority of an imperious master ! Perhaps, alas ! a Greek will tear you from my arms to precipitate you from the top of the tower ; a Greek enraged against our Hector, who had killed his brother, his father, or his son : there have been so many Greeks who have bitten the dust under the blows of Hector ! For your father was formidable in battle. Thus, nowadays, the people weep with anguish over his remains. O, Hector ! What sorrows you have laid upon your old father, mother, and above all, upon me ! What a long misfortune ! And even in dying you did not offer me your hand and address a last and good word for me to remember, night and day, in the midst of my tears !”

We wish carefully to consider the character of Andromache in Homer, because all the other poets have taken her from the hands of Homer, just as he had created her. But in these poets, the person of Andromache has become the type of maternal love only : for after Hector, who can Andromache love so much as her son Astyanax ? What is there better than maternal love, which can take the place of conjugal love in the heart of this modest and reserved woman ? And that is so true, that Euripides, the boldest innovator among the Greek poets, taking Andromache for the subject of one of his tragedies, and giving her another husband than Hector, and another son than Astyanax, has nevertheless represented her rescuing her son Molossus from death. So much was the person of Andromache among the ancients destined to express maternal love and its anguish ! The poets could change the events, but could not alter the sentiments.

Andromache figures in the two tragedies of Euripides, *The Trojans* and *Andromache* ; in the one bewailing the loss of her son Astyanax, whom they tear from her arms to precipitate from the top of the ramparts of Troy ; in the other, trembling for the life of Molossus, the son whom she had from Neoptolemus, and pursued by the hatred of Hermione. Let

us see in what manner Euripides has expressed maternal love in these two dramas.

The Trojans are a tragical picture, rather than a drama. The downfall of Troy is the subject of it, and Hecuba, who personifies, if we may so speak, the misfortunes of her city and family, is the principal and central personage. But around her, there are three personages who excite the interest of the spectator, and constitute the life and action of the dramatic picture: Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen. Cassandra, always full of prophetic phrenzy, and who, having become the slave of Agamemnon, celebrates this marriage of servitude, and predicts the calamities which are about to overwhelm the sons of Atreus; Helen, whom Menelaus wishes to punish for her perfidies, and who pleads her case before him against Hecuba, who accuses her; and then comes Andromache, to whom Talthybius announces the decree made by the Greeks against her son. These three very different scenes make the whole tragedy: a scene of recrimination between Hecuba and Helen before Neoptolemus, who, according to Euripides, orders Helen to be transported on another vessel than his own, so that he may not be tempted to pardon her on the way; a scene of the prophecy of Cassandra, announcing what expiations for Greece are about to follow the downfall of Troy; and finally a scene of the maternal grief of Andromache, who sees her son Astyanax torn from her arms. It is this scene of which we will make a brief exposition.

Andromache envies the fate of Polyseus, whom she had seen sacrificed upon the tomb of Achilles: * "It is over me that you should weep," said she to Hecuba, "I, who must soon be led captive into Greece, destined for the bed of an imperious master. There is less cause for sorrow in the death of your daughter than in my slavery; for I have no longer even hope, the last resource of the wretched, and cannot imagine that I have any more joy to expect upon earth." Hecuba then, with this knowledge of misery and resignation

* Quam multos scriptores rerum suarum magnus ille Alexander secum habuisse dicitur? Atque is tamen cum in Sigœo ad Achilles tumulum adstiterit, O fortunate, inquit, adolescens, qui tua virtutis Homerum præconem inveneris! Et vere: nam nisi Ilias illa exstisset, idem tumulus, qui corpus ejus contexerat, nomen etiam obruisset.—CICERO, *Pro Archia*.

which the experience of a long life gives, exclaims, "O my daughter, cease to remember the misfortunes of Hector. Your tears can no longer avail him. Learn to honor the master whom fate has given you; please him by your sweetness, so that, by you, the Trojans may still find some assistance, so that you may be able to educate your son, the son of my Hector, this last pledge of the destinies of Troy, and that one day, the descendants of your son returning to inhabit our shores, there may again be a Troy." Beautiful and sad consolations, full of the experience of old age, which knows that there is not a day in the life of man, when he can say that he has arrived at the end of his misery, and can tempt or set misfortune at defiance.

Andromache experiences it in a cruel manner. She forgot, in believing herself to be as wretched as she ever could be, she forgot her son, whom the Greeks could destroy. Talthylbius arrives:

Talthylbius. Wife of the bravest of the Trojans, do not curse me; it is against my will that I come to bring you the orders of the Greeks and the sons of Atreus.

Andromache. What is it? Alas! what new calamity does this message bring me?

Tal. They wish that your son . . . How shall I speak?

And. What! Do they wish him to have another master than me? Do they wish to take him away from me?

Tal. None of the Greeks will ever be the master of your son.

And. Shall he remain here, like the rest of the Trojans?

Tal. I do not know how to announce your misfortune.

And. Ah! I approve of your embarrassment, while you have nothing good to tell me.

Tal. Alas! know all. They wish to kill your son.

And. O ye Gods! There is, then, for me a greater grief than to marry Pyrrhus!

Tal. The advice of Ulysses has been adopted in the Council of the Greeks.

And. Alas! alas! There is no measure in our misfortunes.

Tal. Ulysses does not wish that the son of so valiant a father should live.

And. Then may this wish one day fall back upon the heads of his own children!

Talthylbius, who is not only a messenger, but who also sympathizes in the grief which his message conveys, counsels Andromache to submit to her destiny:

What can you do against the will of the Greeks? Consider your condition: Your city and your husband have perished; you are a slave, why do you try to struggle against force? Avoid the censure which the very violence of your grief will attract. . . . Do not curse the Greeks, for, if you enrage the army, your child will not obtain either burial or pity; but if you keep silent, notwithstanding your grief, his dead body will not remain unburied on the shore, and the Greeks will commend your reserve.

These counsels of ancient wisdom, of this wisdom which is resigned to fate, succeed in persuading Andromache; for the value which, in common with all the ancients, she attaches to the honors of burial, makes her feel that, besides the grief which she experiences in witnessing the death of her son, she will also have the pain of seeing him deprived of a tomb. This hope of obtaining for her son a burial, honored by the tears of his mother, touches and restrains her. There are no ravings, no anger, no despair; but what profound and affecting grief!

"O my son! O most precious of all my possessions! You must die under the strokes of the enemies of your country. You must abandon your mother. Alas! It is the glory of your father, this glory which, in the most fortunate families, makes the prosperity of children; it is that which causes your destruction. Your misfortune is to have had a brave and valiant father. O miseries of my nuptial bed! Nuptials which introduced me into the palace of Hector, was it to bring forth a victim for Greece, or a master for Asia? You weep, my son! Do you then understand your misfortunes? Why do you cling to me with your feeble hands, and attach yourself to my gown, like a poor bird, who takes refuge under the wings of its mother? There is no longer the lance of Hector to defend you; there are no more companions of your father, no more Troy! What! Precipitated from the top of the walls, and your head broken by the fall, you must surely perish! O! you whom I embrace with so much love! O! you whose sweet breath I feel! my breasts have then nourished you in vain! In vain have I suffered the pains of maternity and suckling! Embrace your mother, poor child! You will not be able to do so long; press yourself against my bosom, hug me in your arms; place your lips to mine. O Greeks! why will you kill this innocent child?"

These maternal groans affect us more than all the exhi-

bitions of rage in the world. This is true grief, which abandons itself to all the feelings which misfortune excites in the soul of man ; but which does not go beyond, and fall into the ravings of instinct. Such is the *Andromache* of Homer ; and although Euripides has altered the character of it a little in the other scenes, by the sententious maxims which he puts in her mouth, yet he knows how to recover it entirely, when he represents maternal grief.

• We will now study the *Andromache* of Racine.

“Although my tragedy,” says Racine, in the preface of his *Andromache*, “bears the same name as the *Andromache* of Euripides, the subject is, nevertheless, very different. *Andromache*, in Euripides, has fears for the life of Molossus, who is a son whom she had of Pyrrhus, and whom Hermione wishes to put to death with his mother. But we are not here concerned with Molossus ; *Andromache* knows no other husband than Hector, nor any other son but Astyanax. The majority of those who have heard of *Andromache*, only know her as the widow of Hector, and as the mother of Astyanax. We do not believe that she must love either another husband or another son ; and we doubt whether the tears of *Andromache* would have produced, upon the mind of my spectators, the impression which they made, if they had flowed for another son than he whom she had by Hector.”

Racine was right, in saying that the subject of his *Andromache* was very different from the subject of the *Andromache* of Euripides. There is, between the two pieces, only one point of resemblance. *Andromache*, in Racine, as in Euripides, expresses maternal love.

The difference between the ancient and modern *Andromache* extends even to the difference of their customs and their society. The *Andromache* of Euripides represents faithfully the destiny of captives, in antiquity. Yesterday a queen, to-day a slave ; her past grandeur did not protect her from the humiliations and labors of servitude. She weaved cloth under the orders of a mistress ; she fetches water from the public fountains ; she has the care of the house ; in short, she is a slave. As a slave, also, she entered into the bed of the conqueror :

Stirpis Achilleæ fastus juvenem que superbum,
Servitio enixæ, tulimus.

says Andromache herself, in Virgil ; and when Pyrrhus has abandoned her, in order to marry Hermione, he then married her to one of his slaves, Helenus, one of the captives of Troy, and the brother of Hector himself :

Me famulo famulam que Heleno transmisit habendam.

Such, in antiquity, was the condition of a woman who was made a slave ; and even in the age of Virgil, in the golden age of Roman civilization, no one was shocked at hearing Andromache herself speak of this humiliation.

The Andromache of Racine does not much resemble this model. She was a prisoner, but she was honored and respected ; she had a confidant, while the ancient Andromache had only a companion in slavery. She was a queen at the court of Pyrrhus, as James II. was king at St. Germain ; because, according to modern ideas, even dethroned kings preserved their rank ; in short, Pyrrhus, notwithstanding the violence of his love, is a prudent and respectful master, who adores his captive, but who believes that he would degrade himself, if he exercised towards her the rights of slavery, as it existed in ancient times. Andromache, on her part, finds this respect perfectly natural. The antique slave avows, with downcast eyes, that she is obedient to the love of her master ; the modern Andromache is offended at the idea of not remaining faithful to the memory of Hector, and she refuses the hand of Pyrrhus. These are delicate scruples, which give evidence of the purity of her soul, but which also testify to the liberty which she enjoys, according to the customs of modern society, and of the respect which Christianity and chivalry entertain for woman. We believe, with M. de Chateaubriand, that Christianity has given to the Andromache of Racine its delicious purity of sentiment ; but we especially believe that it has given to her the idea of her independence.

Thus between the modern and the ancient Andromache there is no resemblance of fortune ; the one is almost a queen, the other a slave. But both of them are mothers—both have to protect the lives of their sons. Yet we see what a great difference there is between them !

The Andromache of Racine is at once a wife and a mother. She is faithful to her Hector beyond the tomb. The son whom she loves and protects is Astyanax, a pledge of the love of Hector, and who represents him in her eyes :

It is Hector, [*says she,*] always embracing him :
 See his eyes, his mouth, and his rashness already.
 It is himself. It is you, dear husband, whom I embrace.

Act ii. scene 5.

Thus the love which she has for her son is mingled with the fidelity which she preserves for her husband. Troy, Hector, Astyanax, Priam, are names which return continually to her lips ; and Pyrrhus himself does not dare to forbid her to mention those names which cherish her fidelity and her grief.

In Euripides, the son whom Andromache endeavors to protect from death is no longer Astyanax ; it is Molossus, a child whom she had of Pyrrhus ; she is no longer a wife, as in Homer and in Racine, she is only a mother ; and Euripides (with that philosophic discrimination which he displays in the choice and disposition of his subjects, no less than in the discourses of his dramatic characters,) seems to have wished to take from Andromache all that was foreign to the sentiment of maternal love, so that she may only represent this sentiment of which she was the purest and most perfect model. She loves her son, Molossus, not because she attaches to his life, as to that of Astyanax, recollections of happiness and glory ; she loves him although he is the fruit of servitude ; she loves him because he is her son.

The peril of Molossus is more imminent and more terrible than that of Astyanax. We understand, in Racine, Orestes, who comes in the name of Greece to demand the death of Astyanax ; but Pyrrhus is generous, and moreover, he loves Andromache. Thus, even when he threatens Andromache to destroy her son, the spectator, like Andromache herself, does not believe,

. . . . That in his heart he has sworn her death :
 Can love push barbarity to such extremes ?

Act iii. scene 8.

She always hopes, and she has reason to do so. The danger of Molossus does not permit her to entertain such hopes. The absence of Pyrrhus abandons Andromache and Molossus to the power of Hermione and Menelaus, and affords a new evidence of the disorder which prevailed in society in the heroic times, where not only death, but even the absence of the father, placed the child at the mercy of the first comer.

Andromache, in order to escape the jealous anger of Hermione, has taken refuge as a suppliant at the foot of the altar of Thetis, and she has concealed her son. But Menelaus, who acts the part of a traitor and a base wretch, and who represents the Lacedemonians, with whom Athens was at war, when Euripides causes his piece to be played; Menelaus has discovered the retreat of Molossus, and threatens Andromache to kill her son before her eyes if she does not quit the asylum which she has sought at the foot of the altar. "Choose," said he to Andromache, "to die yourself, or see the death of your son atone for your offences towards me and my daughter." Thus, in order to save her son, it is not a question here, as in Racine, to forget the love which she has for the ashes of Hector; it is not the struggle between opposing sentiments. The alternative is to die herself, or to see her son die. Andromache does not hesitate.

"No," says she, "I will not save my life at the expense of that of my child. Let him live! . . . I hope for him a more fortunate fate. . . . It would be a shame for me not to know how to die for my son. See, Menelaus, I abandon the altar which protects me. You can now sacrifice your victim. O my son! your mother is willing to die, so that you may live. If you escape death, remember your mother and how she has perished for you; and when you will see your father again, when you will kiss him, tell him, in weeping and kissing his hands, tell him what I have done to save you. Our children are our life and our soul. Whoever has them not, and censures the love which we have for them, I pity him; he has less troubles, but he is not to be envied even in his happiness."

We touch at this point the fundamental difference between the two pieces. The subject of Racine's piece, is much less the peril of Astyanax than the love of Pyrrhus for Andromache, and his doubt between Andromache and Hermione. Who will triumph, Andromache or Hermione? This it is which makes the principal interest of the piece. It is true, we often hear Astyanax and Hector spoken of; but the love of Pyrrhus, this love now suppliant and then imperious, full of anger, which a single glance appeases, and of resolutions, which a word changes; this love constitutes the basis of the piece, and also makes all of its incidents. In the piece of Euripides, on the other hand, it is not a question of

love, the only question is the danger of Molossus. Orestes, in Euripides, scarcely permits it to be seen, that he loves Hermione. He does not come to Epirus to *seek a barbarian* ; no : "In passing by the country of Pythia, to consult the oracle of Dodona, he has thought proper to make inquiry about a relative, Hermione of Sparta ; he wishes to know if she is living and happy." In order to perceive more clearly the difference between the two pieces, compare in Racine and Euripides the scene between Andromache and Hermione ; it is in both poets, the jealousy of Hermione which makes the subject of it ; but in Racine, this jealousy is that of a woman, who, enjoying with delight the humiliation of her rival, knows however how to restrain it, and permits her passion to burst forth only in ironical expressions :

If Pyrrhus must be ruled, who can do it better than you ?
Your eyes have long enough reigned over his soul,
Make him pronounce it : I will consent to it, madam.

Act iii. scene 4.

The Greek Hermione, on the other hand, is the legitimate wife, who in a fit of jealousy and anger, wishes to kill the slave who has disputed with her the bed of her husband. It is Sarah, driving away Hagar ; it is a family scene of the patriarchs and heroes, or a scene in the Seraglio. We see also what violence and abusive expressions are used ! "It is you," says she to Andromache, "it is you, who, both a slave and a captive, wished to drive me away from this palace, in order to become the mistress of it yourself. By your fascinations, you make me odious to my husband, and you have struck my womb with sterility. The minds of the women of Asia are skilled in these fatal arts, but I will put a stop to your audacity. Neither the abode of Nereis, nor this temple, nor this altar, shall protect you . . . Wretch, have you carried your impudence so far as to enter the bed of him whose father has killed your husband ?"

Nor is the Andromache of Euripides, this sweet and complaining mother who entreats Hermione to save Astyanax, who speaks of their rivalry in the presence of Pyrrhus, only to disavow it :

I do not come here, with jealous tears,
To envy you a heart, which yields to your charms.

Act iii. scene 4.

She has not those touching tears in favor of her son :

But there remains to me a son ; you will one day know,
Madam, how far our love for a son will carry us.

Permit me to conceal him on some desert isle ;
Of the cares of a mother, you may be assured,
And my son will learn only to weep with me.

Act iii. scene 4.

The *Andromache* of Euripides, opposes insult to insult ; she reproaches the daughter of Helen with wanting those virtues which make the honor of wives ; and upon this subject, she makes a curious apology for the domestic manners of the East, as opposed to those of the West :

“ It is not my fascinations which cause you to be hated by your husband ; but your not knowing how to make your intercourse with him agreeable. The true philter is not beauty ; it is the virtues, which are pleasing to husbands. You are always speaking in extravagant praise of the grandeur of Lacedemon, and contemptuously of Scyros ; you are making a display of your riches among the poor ; Menelaus is, in your eyes, greater than Achilles ; it is this which renders you odious to your husband. A woman, even if she were united to a wicked husband, should endeavor to please him, and not arrogantly to contend with him. If you had for a husband, some king of Thrace, where the same man, by turns, shares his bed with a number of women, would you then have killed them all ? O dear Hector, if Venus inspired you with some desires, I loved, on your account, the women whom you loved ; I have even, often offered my breast to the children whom another mother has given you, in order to remove from your abode the bitterness of family quarrels. And it is thus that I gained by my sweetness the heart of my husband.”

Such are the differences between the ancient and the modern *Andromache* ; differences which it is well to observe, because the modern *Andromache* is one of the most curious examples of the manner in which Racine composed his characters, mingling with infinite art in his conceptions, the associations of antiquity, with the inspiration of modern ideas. We hear all those poetic names of Troy, Priam and Hector, those sad invocations to the beloved shores of Asia :

XV.

OF MATERNAL LOVE—MEROPE IN TORELLI, MAFFEI, VOLTAIRE,
AND ALFIERI.

THE character of Andromache is the purest and most touching expression of maternal love ; but it does not express all the energy of this love. Maternal tenderness cannot express a more sweet and penetrating language, but it may become more passionate and violent ; it cannot inspire more pity, but it can inspire more terror. That is the difference between Andromache and Merope.

Euripides, among the ancients, and among the moderns, Torelli, Maffei, and Alfieri in Italy, and Voltaire in France, have made this character the subject of their respective dramas. We will briefly notice the expression which these different poets have given to maternal love.

The mythologist, Hygin, has preserved the argument of the tragedy of Euripides. The subject is simple and affecting. Polyphon has killed Chresphon, king of Messenia, has massacred his sons, and married his widow, Merope. Telephon alone, of the sons of Chresphon, has escaped from the massacre. Merope has committed him, while yet an infant, to the care of an inhabitant of Elis. But when afterwards he felt himself become strong and brave, Telephon comes to Messenum and announces to Polyphon, that he has killed the son of Merope. The tyrant receives him with joy. Merope, who has been informed of the arrival of a stranger, who has come to receive of Polyphon his reward for a murder, commences to tremble for the life of her son ; and very soon after, the old man whom she employed as a messenger in Elis, coming to announce to her that he has not been able to find Telephon, she no longer doubts of her misfortune. She goes in search of Telephon, whom she finds sleeping in the palace, and throws herself upon him with her dagger in her hand to

avenge her son, when the old man advancing, recognizes Telephon, and checks Merope. Telephon does not delay to kill the tyrant, and to recover the throne of his father.

Such is the subject of the tragedy of Euripides, which is interesting without being complicated.

In the sixteenth century, in 1595, Count Torelli, who, like many Italian writers of that century, mingled business with letters, and who was an ambassador and poet, has, in his *Merope*, taken the argument of Euripides in all its simplicity, and it is that which has made him so successful. His piece is, (if we may be permitted to borrow a phrase from architecture,) a rebuilding of the tragedy of Euripides; not that he has attempted to put together the fragments of the Merope of Euripides; he has done better: he permitted himself to be inspired with the subject of the antique tragedy, without occupying himself with the fifty or sixty verses of Euripides, scattered here and there, and which were not even collected in the sixteenth century; and as he had a love for the antique literature, and as the Italian genius is the offspring of the Greek, there are, we dare say, many scenes of the tragedy of Torelli which seem to have been taken from Euripides. Telephon has truly the simplicity and grandeur of the personages of the antique tragedy, when returning to Messenum, poor, unknown, persecuted, but full of joy and confidence, he salutes this country so much longed for:

“O, Country! Dear and beloved Country! My eyes, so long deprived of seeing you, can at length feast themselves upon your beauty! Here is the asylum where I was brought up; here is the land which the invincible Hercules, my ancestor, has given to his descendants, and from which I have been unjustly banished! Sacred temple! which my father has so long perfumed with incense; Altar! watered by him with the blood of so many victims, I entreat you come to my assistance, and to request heaven to permit my hands to fulfil my revenge! Hall of my ancestors! magnificence of my fathers! whence comes it that in seeing you, I am both happy and sad? It is here that I was born the son of one of your kings, and yet the injustice of fate has torn me from your bosom; I have lost my father and my country, and so many dear and faithful subjects; there is now only Nessus to recognize me, Nessus alone whom I would wish to find; but I do not dare to ask any one, for the palace of the tyrant

is full of suspicions : the walls, the windows, the doors, have eyes and ears to spy out my steps and to report my words.”*

He very soon relates to the tyrant that he himself has killed Telephon the son of Merope ; and at this news, Polyphon, full of joy, and no longer wanting confidence in the stranger, makes him his guest and his friend. Telephon then wanders about freely in the palace of his fathers, and arrives in the centre where stands the marble throne of Chresphon. He reposes with a mixture of respect and joy upon this paternal seat ; for Apollo predicted to him that he would find the end of his misfortunes, when he would be seated upon the throne of his father ; and full of the hopes and recollections which this throne revives in him : “It is then here,” he exclaims, “that after so great and such long misfortunes, I must find rest. How sweetly my limbs re-

* O cara amata patria, io gli occhi pasco
Lungamente digiuni
Della tua dolce e sì bramata vista !
Questo è pur il bel nido,
Ov'io sì dolcemente fui nodrito :
Quest'è la terra pur, ch'Ercole invito,
Mio gran progenitore, a goder diede
Col valor acquistata a' suoi nepoti,
Ch'or così ingiustamente m'è intercetta.
Augusti, e sacri tempj, ch'onorati
Foste dal padre mio d'arabi odori,
Are, che di vermiglio sangue asperse
Foste da tante vittime, impetrate
Dal cielo a un pio d'un empio omai vendetta !
Larghe piazze, e palazzi,
Contesti di diversi e puri marmi,
Lasso me, ch'ora il rivedervi insieme
Mi diletta e m'attrista. Io pur qui nacqui
D'un vostro caro re, principe vostro ;
E pur dal vostro grembo iniqua sorte
Mi svelse, e perdei padre e regno insieme,
Nè di tanti sì cari e sì fedeli,
Che soggetti mi fur fedeli e cari,
Un sol mi riconosce : Nesso solo,
Vorrei Nesso trovar ; ma non ardisco
Dimandarne ad alcuno ; chè le case
De' tiranni son piene di sospetto ;
Parlano le pareti e le finestre,
Par ch'abbiano le porte occhi et orecchie
Per ispiar, per riportar mai sempre.

[Edit. de Vérone, 1723, p. 356.]

pose ! O Apollo ! Apollo ! To enter into this palace, as I have to-day, an unexpected and an unknown guest, to recline upon this sacred seat, the end of my misfortunes, how many mountains, how many roads have I not traversed in my flight ! How many sleepless nights ! I know not what languishing and ecstatic joy steals over my senses ; my head falls back in spite of myself ; sweet sleep, the sleep of the paternal roof comes over my eyes. Alas ! can I close my eyelids ? Alone, unarmed, exposed to so many hatreds, who will watch over me ? But no, I feel it, I cannot resist the fatigue which overwhelms me, or rather the overpowering influence of the god, who has conducted me hither ; it is then to him that I must resign myself. May he protect me ! May he save my innocence from the perils which encompass it.”*

And while he is sleeping in the seat of his father with such high hopes, and invoking the protection of the gods, the chorus at the bottom of the Theatre is indignant at seeing this man silent and sleeping on the throne of his father, when he has just killed his son. It is here that the chorus of Torelli resembles the chorus of the ancients and becomes dramatic : “ He sleeps, [it chants,] as if upon a delicious bed ; he sleeps full of calmness and security, at the moment of danger and death ; he sleeps, the villain and murderer !

* O quanto dopo un grave e lungo affanno,
Dopo lungo cammino il rotto e stanco
Corpo soavemente si restaura !
Quanti colli ho trascorsi e quante valli,
Quante notti vegliai, mentre procuro
Giungere inaspettato e sconosciuto !
Or, con molli delizie tutte irriga
Le mie languide membra il buon riposo !
Ma poco amico a me la testa aggrava ;
Par che mi furi gli occhi, e scherzi intorno
A le mie cave tempie il pigro sonno.
Ben mi saria compagno amico e caro
In altro tempo, ma cent'occhi avere,
Non che due soli, aperti or mi conviene,
Nè, lasso, a la stanchezza, al gran bisogno,
C'ho di dar requie a' travagliati sensi,
Resister posso ; a la mia sorte il tutto,
E me stesso rimetto a chi governa
Il cielo, e 'l tutto regge, e d'innocente
Sangue nel maggior rischio ha propria cura.

And his eyes are now closed as if to repose, his eyes which are so soon to be closed in eternal night! O Jupiter! It is thou who takest away prudence and judgment from men, who, burdened with the weight of their crimes, have permitted the time of repentance to escape and exhausted the fountain of thy clemency! It is thou who fillest them with audacity and hopes, and who urgest them on like blind men, down the precipice which must soon engulf them!"*

At this moment, Merope enters raving with anger, grief and revenge, with her dagger in her hand, and preparing to sacrifice Telephon. Before striking him, she orders him to be bound, in order that he may suffer death while awake. Telephon then, ready to receive the mortal stroke, exclaims, "Is this then, Apollo, thy oracle? Is it thus that I must find repose upon this seat? Is it death which awaits me then? Alas! my father will not be thus avenged! And myself unfortunate will not be more so than he! Death has for me but one consolation; it is that at least I die in my palace, and expire upon the throne where I ought to live.

Merope. Ye gods! Who art thou? Tell me, this palace, this throne which is thine, this father who will not be avenged Speak; speak, do not delay, do not endeavor to deceive me in this terrible moment! Who art thou?

Telephon. There is no person here who knows me but Nessus, the old servant of the queen.

And it is then that Nessus, running and meeting Telephon, exclaims, "Cast away this dagger, O Queen! It is Telephon! It is your son."

This is the stage effect so long expected, which made the Greeks tremble: for Plutarch in one of his essays, in which

* Quasi tra lievi e delicate piume,
E de la sicurezza accolto in grembo,
In tal periglio, in così certa morte
Quest'empio e scelerato si riposa,
E per breve conforto or gli occhi chiude,
Che saran chiusi in sempiterna notte.
Come privi di mente e di consiglio,
O sommo Giove, quei che di rie colpe
Carchi, al suo pentimento han chiuso il passo,
E della tua pietate il fonte han secco;
D'audacia tu, di vana speme colmi,
Ciechi gli spingi a precipizio aperto.

he speaks a little of every thing, the essay "*Is it lawful to eat Flesh,*" relates that at the moment when the Merope of Euripides, with the dagger raised over Telephon, exclaims : "In the name of the avenging gods, receive the mortal stroke !" there was a universal groan throughout the Theatre, the crowd fearing lest Narbas should not arrive in time to save Telephon.

The argument of Hygin, and especially the drama of Torelli, restore to us, if we may so speak, the antique Merope. Notwithstanding some traits, which spoil the beauty of her character, Merope is already, in Torelli, this ardent and despairing mother, who (her son having been scarcely recognized, and with difficulty saved) fears to see him perish under the strokes of a tyrant : "O my son," says she, "I do not know, if in embracing you, my heart is more agitated with fear than with pleasure ; I am happy to see you, and I groan in thinking of the dangers which surround you." These are the anguishes of maternal love, represented by Torelli, which Maffei, Voltaire, and Alfieri especially wished to represent.

Maffei has known how to find a happy and expressive manner of painting the maternal love of Merope. When Egisthe, still unknown, is brought before Polyphon, as if guilty of murder, Merope is moved at beholding this young man : she thinks of her son, who is perhaps as unfortunate as he :

He reminds me of Egisthe ; Egisthe is of his age.

She says also, in Voltaire :

Perhaps, like, from shore to shore,
Unknown, as a fugitive, and every where repulsed,
He suffers the contempt which follows poverty.

Act ii. scene 2.

Not only does the misfortune of Egisthe cause Merope to think of the misfortune of her son, she experiences also, at the sight of this young man, an indescribable and mingled emotion of pity and tenderness ; the consciousness of their consanguinity was already felt by the mother and the son, while they were not yet fully aware of it. Merope is even represented as believing that she perceived some features of Egisthe, resembling those of Chresphon :

. While he spoke to me,

says she in Voltaire, who only translates Maffei,

His voice touches me, all my heart is troubled.

Chresphon . . O Heavens, I have believed . . I blush with shame !

Yes, I believed that I discovered some of the features of Chresphon.

Act ii. scene 2.

Egisthe also feels astonished and overcome with pity. These confused presentiments please the spectator, and seem natural to him, because between a mother and a son, the power of affection is so strong and lively, that we cannot but believe that as soon as they meet, even without knowing each other, they would be secretly conscious of the bond which united them together.

Maffei (and it is the great merit of his piece) has not given to his Merope any sentiment foreign to the sentiments of maternal tenderness. He has put away far from her, those amorous insipidities, which, in Torelli, spoil her character, and the philosophic maxims which Voltaire has injudiciously mingled with her grief.

Of all the heroines of Voltaire, Merope is, perhaps, the one who has the least philosophical pretensions ; but she nevertheless has some of them ; and although Voltaire's piece is better conducted than that of Maffei, although the scenes are more ably introduced, and more interesting, yet the tragedy of Maffei can sustain a comparison with that of Voltaire, on account of its simplicity, and because Merope is always a mother without ever caring to be a philosopher. But if we set aside this fault, how faithfully is the maternal love of Merope represented in Voltaire ! What admirable thirst for revenge, when she believes that she sees in Egisthe the murderer of her son !

Let them bring before my eyes this horrible victim !

Let us invent torments commensurate with his crime ;

They can never be equal to my grief !

Act iii. scene 4.

What emotion, and what terror, when Narbas, arresting her arm, already raised to strike Egisthe :

I was about to avenge my son !

exclaims she.

. . . You are about to sacrifice him,

replies Narbas. Finally, what a fine scene is that where, in the presence of Polyphon, she betrays her son, while wishing to defend him! When Polyphon, astonished at seeing that Merope had not sacrificed Egisthe, as she wished, Egisthe said to the tyrant :

. . . You sell my blood at the marriage of the queen.
My life is of little account, and I will die without pain ;
But I am unfortunate, innocent, and a stranger ;
If Heaven has made you a king, it was to protect me ;
I have justly killed an unjust adversary ;
Merope wishes my death ; I excuse her ; she is a mother ;
I will bless the blows which are ready to fall upon me ;
And I here accuse only a tyrant, such as you !

Polyphon. Wretch ! do you dare in your insolent rage . . .

Merope. Ah ! my lord, pardon his imprudent youth ;
Educated far from courts, and brought up in the woods,
He does not yet know what is due to kings.

Act iv. scene 2.

This movement of Merope, which betrayed the secret which she wished to keep ; this mother, anxious to justify her son, and who denounces him while justifying him ; these involuntary explosions of maternal love, are not stage tricks ; they are better ; they are the emotions of the human heart. We will notice in the *Merope* of Voltaire, another not less pleasing trait. As soon as Egisthe is aware of his birth and his rank, he easily adopts their sentiments : he had the pride of a man of heart ; he naturally acquired the dignity of a king. From this moment, also, it is he who becomes the leading character ; Merope is only the second. It is he who undertakes to assault and strike the tyrant. Merope, who was but just now so rash as to throw herself in the midst of the soldiers, to save her son ; Merope, who, in the first act, defied without hesitation, the anger of Polyphon, is now weak and timid. She counsels her son to yield, and to await better days. Egisthe, on the other hand, wishes to hasten to the temple, where Polyphon awaits Merope, for the purpose of marrying her :

. . . I will there find the gods,
Who punish murder, and who are my ancestors.

Act iv. scene 4.

From whence comes this change in the parts and characters of the drama ? Whence comes this sudden timidity of

Merope? From maternal love. A mother does not know either what is courage or timidity; she only knows what can save her son. Merope has recovered and saved her son; her object is accomplished. She lives in hope, it is true, of seeing him reascend the throne of his ancestors; but before all, she desires to see him live; she attaches more importance to the life of Egisthe, than to his glory: she is a mother. Egisthe prefers rather to avenge himself and to reign, than to live: he is a man.

Like his two predecessors, Alfieri, in his *Merope*, also wished to represent maternal love, and has dedicated his tragedy to his mother. But Alfieri did not know the natural march of the passions, and the ordinary progress of the feelings of the human heart; he was only acquainted with its emotions of rage and violence. Hence, in his tragedies, we perceive more abruptness than force; more precipitation than seductiveness; more movement than emotion.

Alfieri has taken care himself, in his Memoirs, to relate to us how he was induced to write his *Merope*. "I was seized with great indignation," says he, "in reading the Merope of Maffei, and in thinking that poor Italy was, in the matter of the drama, so poor and blind that they regarded this drama as the best of the Italian tragedies, and as the only good one; and immediately there flashed before my eyes the recollection of another tragedy of the same name, and upon the same subject, much more simple, and more full of passion and excitement than this." Alfieri at this time was at Rome, as happy as he ever could be. He inhabited the Villa Strozzi, near the Baths of Diocletian; during the morning, versifying at his leisure in the silence of those great Roman palaces, which already seemed to be a desert, fast hastening to ruin; during the evening, running on horseback "in those immense and dilapidated solitudes in the environs of Rome, which invite us to reflect, to weep, and to make verses;" and thus gratifying these two passions alternately which divided his heart: poetry and horses. It is there that he wrote his *Merope*. But neither the happiness which he enjoyed at Rome, nor the subject which he treated, unstrung the chords of his lyre; he had borrowed nothing from the solitudes of the Roman *campagna*, of their melancholy grandeur and their majestic repose, so well adapted to the expression of the sorrows of the antique Merope; he had acquired only, if we may so speak, their

aridity and barrenness. His tragedy is stiff, rather than simple ; his Merope has more anger than grief, more violence than tenderness ; she abuses Polyphon too much, and particularly in her reproaches, she seems to be more a citizen than a mother ; for she seems to detect in Polyphon the oppressor of Messenum no less than the author of the misfortunes of her son.*

We have but one more reflection to make upon the character of Merope, such as it is represented by Torelli, Maffei, Voltaire, and Alfieri. In these four authors, Merope inspires us at the same time with pity and respect. She is a mother ; she defends her son ; she is a queen, she is virtuous, she is oppressed. She excites all kinds of interest ; that which is attached to grandeur, to misfortune, to virtue, and to maternal tenderness. We can love or pity her at our pleasure ; nothing is harsh in the sentiments with which she inspires us, nothing detracts from our esteem, nothing subdues our pity. The interest which she inspires is unique and perfect ; it is neither divided nor disturbed. Do the virtues of Merope take away from the expression of maternal love any thing of its force and its energy ? Is she less ardent and less passionate as a mother because, as a woman, she is pure and virtuous ? Will she excite more pity if, in connection with this love for her son, which is a virtue, there should be nourished in her soul ungovernable vices ? Will this mixture, and we may even say this antipathy of sentiments produce more effect than the moral unity which Torelli, Maffei, Voltaire, and Alfieri have given to the character of Merope ? These are the questions which Victor Hugo has suggested by his drama of *Lucrece Borgia*.

* Duro, abborrito,
Ben sai, tuo giogo è qui : gioia non altra
Provo che questa al dolor mio.

XVI.

OF MATERNAL LOVE—LUCRECE BORGIA.

WE can never forget the first representation of *Lucrece Borgia*. We followed with an ardent curiosity the development of this powerful drama. We did not weep, we were not moved ; we were astonished and overwhelmed by it. These violent feelings, these multiplied theatrical tricks, these dramatic turns, kept us in continual suspense. We were not affected, but we felt ourselves oppressed by a heavy and imperious yoke which we could not shake off.

In speaking thus, we express, we know, the physical emotion which we experienced, rather than the moral emotion which we usually expect to find at the Theatre. But this drama has this peculiarity, that the moral and physical emotions are continually confounded. The ideas and sentiments seem to be no more the emotions of the mind or the soul, so impetuous and violent are they ; they are the movements of instinct ; and the passions of the human heart seem to be divested of their morality, as if of a last weakness, in order to find in a kind of deliberate brutality a new source of power and grandeur. Hence, as we are persuaded that dramatic literature has no other resources except the emotions of the human soul, we ask, in seeing this drama advance with temerity to this invisible, though certain, boundary, where sensation takes the place of sentiment, where pity becomes a suffering, where, in fine, illusion almost borders on reality ; we ask, if this piece be not the last dramatic work possible, and if art has not exhausted its power in this last and terrible delivery.

You have already seen the kind of blame which we attach to the drama of Victor Hugo. The author has wished

to represent maternal love ; but while Voltaire has taken care to give to Merope all the virtues which could still ennoble maternal tenderness, Victor Hugo, in *Lucrece Borgia*, has placed this sentiment in the midst of all the vices ; not that they may be purified by this solitary virtue, or that they should extinguish it, but in order that they may serve as a contrast, being persuaded that it would shine out to more advantage across the darkness which surrounds it. He has wished, as he himself has said, to put the mother in the monster. What is the consequence ? In *Lucrece Borgia*, maternal love is no longer a passion inspired by nature, approved by morality, and which becomes the purest and most ardent virtue of woman, but a blind and violent emotion which is excited by passion and caprice.

There are, in *Lucrece Borgia*, two parts, and they are joined together with much force and ability. In the first part, we see how the mother endeavors to save her son ; in the second, how the son is induced to kill his mother. The first part resembles *Merope*, and the second *Semiramis* ; for Victor Hugo has, if we may so speak, combined and concentrated in his drama, the interest of the two tragedies of Voltaire. We will follow, in these two phases of the drama, the development of the character of *Lucrece Borgia*.

Gennaro is the son of Lucrece Borgia ; he is the fruit of her incestuous connection with her brother, John Borgia. She has for this son the tenderness of a mother, but she does not confess it. Gennaro has grown up without knowing his mother ; he has become one of the bravest chiefs of the carriers (condottieri) of Italy, and he is in the service of the Republic of Venice. At Venice, he has met with Lucrece Borgia ; and as soon as he has discovered who she was by the imprecations of his friends, he has abandoned her with horror. This is the first chastisement of Lucrece. The horror which she inspires, prevents her from disclosing to Gennaro that she is his mother, when she is insulted in his presence, and by him. Very soon after Gennaro comes to Ferrara ; and as his friends joke him about the love with which he has, they say, inspired Lucrece Borgia, he effaces with his poniard the first letter of that name, which is engraved on the front of the Borgia palace. It remains *orgia*, the true device of this woman and this family. Lucrece Borgia, not knowing who offered this indignity to her name,

goes to complain of it to the Duke of Ferrara, her husband ; and he, who knows the tenderness of Lucrece for Gennaro, and is mistaken as to the nature of this love, makes a solemn promise to her, that she shall be avenged as she requests.

Donna Lucretia. One word, sir, before the guilty man is brought in. Whoever this man may be, whether of your city or your house, Don Alphonso, pledge me your word of a crowned duke, that he shall not go hence alive.

Don Alphonso. I pledge it ; I pledge it to you. Do you understand me well, madam ?

Donna Lucretia. It is well. Ah ! Doubtless I understand it. Introduce him now, that I may interrogate him myself. . . . (*Seeing Gennaro enter.*) Gennaro !

Don Alphonso (*approaching her softly and smiling*). Do you know this man ?

Donna Lucretia (*aside*). Gennaro ! What fatality, my God !

Then Lucrece demands of her husband a particular interview, and requests him to pardon Gennaro. Alphonso refuses. She urges him.

Donna Lucretia. You cannot ? But why can you not grant me something as insignificant as the life of this captain ?

Don Alphonso. Do you ask me why ?

Donna Lucretia. Yes, why ?

Don Alphonso. Because the captain is your lover, madam !

Donna Lucretia. Heavens !

Don Alphonso. Because you have been to seek him at Venice, because you would go to hell to find him . . . because even now you regard him with looks full of tears and devouring passion ! . . .

Donna Lucretia. My Lord ! my Lord ! I entreat you on my knees and with my hands clasped together, in the name of Jesus and Mary, in the name of my father and mother ; my Lord, I entreat you to save the life of this captain. . . .

Don Alphonso. If you could read the fixed resolution which is in my soul, you would no more speak of him, than if he were already dead.

Donna Lucretia (*rising*). Ah ! Take care of yourself, Don Alphonso of Ferrara, my fourth husband ! . . .

Neither the entreaties nor the menaces of Lucretia moved Alphonso : " I have left to your highness," says he, " the choice of the kind of death ; decide ! "

Donna Lucretia (*wringing her hands*). O, my God ! O, my God ! O, my God !

Don Alphonso. You do not answer? I will kill him in the ante-chamber with my sword. (*He is about to leave, she seizes his arm.*)

Donna Lucretia. Stop!

Don Alphonso. Do you prefer to pour out for him yourself a glass of Syracusan wine?

Donna Lucretia. Gennaro!

Don Alphonso. He must die!

Donna Lucretia. Not by the sword!

Don Alphonso. The manner is of little consequence. Which do you choose?

Donna Lucretia. The other.

Don Alphonso. You will take care not to deceive yourself, and pour out for him yourself from this golden flagon which you know. I will be present myself. Do not suppose that I am about to quit you.

Donna Lucretia. I will do what you desire.

We do not intend to make any remarks with regard to the poison which Alphonso constrains Lucretia to present, herself, to Gennaro. This refinement of cruelty, we are aware, ought to introduce the principal scene between Lucretia and Gennaro; and Lucretia accepts the horrible duty of pouring out the poison herself for her son, only because she has the counter-poison (antidote) ready. But the spectator who is not aware that she has this resource, is astonished to see a mother consent to pour out the poison herself for her son. Does she know if she can give him the counter-poison in time? Does she know if Don Alphonso will leave her alone with Gennaro? And, above all, why does she resort to these dangerous expedients, when she can by a word save Gennaro? Alphonso believes that Gennaro is the lover of Lucretia, and this is the reason why he wishes his death. Let Lucretia say that he is her son, the jealousy of the Duke is appeased and Gennaro is saved. But this son is the fruit of an incest. After the reproaches which Alphonso makes to Lucretia, we do not see that she runs any risk in confessing her fault; she hazards the loss of the esteem of her husband, and she has to gain the life of her son. What is it then that arrests her? Her son is about to perish by the sword or by poison, and she preserves silence! Is it fear? She is a mother. Is it modesty? She is Lucretia Borgia. Does Merope hesitate when Polyphon orders the soldiers to strike Egisthe?

“Barbarian! he is my son!”

exclaims she ; and yet this maternal cry must not save Egisthe, for Egisthe, as soon as he is recognized, is the enemy of Polyphon, and he has every thing to fear ; while Gennaro, as soon as Lucrece shall have confessed him for her son, will have nothing more to fear from Alphonso. Why, then, does not the cry of Merope, this irresistible shriek, in beholding the sword suspended over the head of her son, proceed from the lips of Lucrece Borgia ? For, in a word, she has prayed and entreated ; she has been flattering, insinuating, and she has obtained nothing ; she has menaced, she remembered the beautiful movement of Clytemnestra, who in the *Orestes* of Voltaire, defends her son against Egisthe, when this son came to Argos to sacrifice his mother ; she has warned her *fourth husband* not to push her to extremities. Her threats have not succeeded any better than her entreaties. What, then, remains for her to do in order to save her son, but the heart-rending cry of Merope ?

Yes, if Lucrece pronounces this solemn word, Gennaro is saved ; but then, this would put an end to the piece ; for it is this solemn word, which makes the denouement ; it is this word, suspended during the whole drama, which the author reserves for the last ; it is the word which explains and concludes all. As soon as this word is pronounced, the piece stops. Let it then be suspended, notwithstanding the peril of Gennaro. Let it be suspended, at the terrible moment when Lucrece pours out the poison for him, with her own hands, and presents to him the bowl, though we doubt whether the firmness of a mother has ever been exposed to a more severe trial. But take care ! To suspend such a word, a great motive is necessary, another cause besides the necessity of the drama ; the spectator must believe that the personage should have good reasons for not pronouncing the word which would explain every thing. Lucrece Borgia, you say, trusts to the counterpoison ; she can save Gennaro, without yet confessing that he is her son. We acknowledge it. Let us examine this scene.

Lucrece has remained alone with Gennaro :

Donna Lucretia. Gennaro ! you are poisoned !

Gennaro. Poisoned ! Madam.

Donna Lucretia. Poisoned !

Gennaro. I could have doubted of it, the poison having been poured out by you.

Donna Lucretia. Oh! do not overwhelm me, Gennaro; do not take away from me the little strength which I have left, and of which I stand in need for some moments.—Hear me. The Duke is jealous of you, the Duke believes you to be my lover. The Duke has left me no other alternative but to see you poniarded by Rustighello in my presence, or to pour out the poison for you myself; a dreadful poison, Gennaro,—a poison at which the idea alone, makes every Italian grow pale, who knows the history of the last twenty years. . .

Gennaro. Yes, the poison of the Borgia!

Donna Lucretia. You have drunk of it. Nobody in the world knows the antidote to this terrible composition, except the Pope, M. De Valentinois, and myself. Hold: see this phial, which I always carry concealed under my girdle. This phial, Gennaro, is life, is health, is safety. A single drop on your lips, and you are saved.

Gennaro (looking at her fixedly). Madam, who are you, who tell me that that is not poison?

Donna Lucretia (overwhelmed). O my God! my God!

Gennaro. Are you not Lucrece Borgia?

An awful situation! Lucrece Borgia is punished for her crimes by the very distrust with which they inspire her son, when she wishes to save him. It is the most terrible chastisement which can be inflicted on a mother.

There is one word, however, which would prove to Gennaro that Lucrece, at this moment, does not offer him the poison; it is this word, always suspended, this single word: *You are my son!* Lucrece could have been silent when the sword was lifted to slay her son, when the poison was poured out, when she herself had offered it to Gennaro, when Gennaro had drunk it; she could have been silent before all of these perils, although every other mother would have spoken: she knew that there still remained a way to save her son. But we see that this way escaped her by the very distrust of her son. How, then, is she to convince him; and how is she to save him? By a single word: *You are my son!* Why does she not pronounce it? What can prevent her? Has she other words better than this word, to persuade Gennaro? Does she fear, after having heard this solemn word, that Gennaro would still insult and curse her? No: the sentiments of the human heart know their rights and their dignity. Lucrece is a mother, and by this title she knows that she must be respected by her son. Let all insult and abuse her; let her be for all others, a poisoner, adulterous and incestuous; for her son, she is a mother; and if he

insults her, he would become as criminal and detestable as she. When we hear Gennaro exclaiming to himself: "What wretch, abandoned of heaven, would wish to be born of such a mother? To be the son of Lucrece Borgia! To say: *my mother*, to Lucrece Borgia!"—we are horrified at those involuntary blasphemies, and we ask with a kind of anger, why this miserable woman, who has been outraged, does not at last revolt against the insult offered to her! Why she does not announce to this implacable avenger, in order to punish him in his turn: *You are my son!*—Chide him then, Madam, we conjure you; chide him, so that you may convince him that you do not wish to poison him: for your maternal heart must rebel against this defiance and distrust; chide him, so that he may change his insults into tears, and his maledictions into prayers: for your maternal pride must also be indignant against this sacrilegious anger. Let him, in short, weep; let him weep over you and over himself. Change into horror and pity this terror which hangs over this scene; and as the spectators can only be moved to pity by the emotion of the characters of the drama, make your son recognize you, and weep over you and himself; over you, who love him in spite of your remorse, and with so much love; over himself, the only man in the world who is bound to respect you, but to whom this respect must become so much the more sacred as it is the more painful. Do not fear, all degraded as you are by your crimes, to attest the majesty of the maternal character; this majesty is sacred even in you!

Crébillon, in one of his worst pieces, his *Semiramis*, has not forgotten this respect which mothers have a right to expect from their sons, and has made of it a very moving tragedy. Mermicide reveals to Ninias, concealed under the name of Agenor, that Semiramis is his mother—Semiramis, who is scarcely less criminal than Lucrece Borgia; and Mermicide pities Agenor for having such a mother.

Agenor.—Mermicide, stop! she is my mother, and I wish That they would respect her, as they revere the gods.
I will never forget that I owe to her my life,
And I do not intend that any other should forget it.

Act iv. scene 8.

We have seen Lucrece saving her son as Merope did. Let us now see Lucrece killed by Gennaro, as was Semira-

mis by Ninias, and compare, in this relation, the tragedy of Voltaire with the drama of Victor Hugo.

Lucrece has been insulted at Venice, by five friends of Gennaro, and has sworn to avenge herself upon them. These five young men, who had come on an embassy to Ferrara, sup with the Princess Negroni, and at this supper they are poisoned. At the very moment when they feel the effects of the poison, Lucrece appears, and tells them that they have only a few minutes to live. She at the same time shows the monks who were charged to hear their confession, and the coffins which are prepared for their bodies. There are five coffins, one for each of these lords. Lucrece triumphs in her revenge. At this moment Gennaro, whom she did not see until then—whom she believed to be far from Ferrara, and who, in order not to quit his brother in arms, Maffio Orsini, has supped with him at the Princess Negroni's, and has been poisoned with him—Gennaro pushes aside his five friends and advances towards Lucrece, saying to her :

Gennaro. We must have a sixth coffin, madam !

Donna Lucretia. Heavens ! Gennaro !

Gennaro. Himself.

Donna Lucretia. Let every one leave here ! Let them leave us alone. Gubetta, whatever may happen, whatever they may hear without of what is passing within here, let no one enter !

Gubetta. Very well, madam.

Thus this son, whom she had saved with so much difficulty, she recovers again, and he is about to die. Gennaro, however, has the antidote with him : he will only die then if he wishes it ; but as there is not in the phial enough liquid to save his five friends, since he has scarcely enough for himself alone, Gennaro breaks the phial without drinking the antidote ; then, taking a knife from the banquet table, he announces to Lucrece that he is about to kill her, in order to expiate her crimes.

Gennaro. Make your prayer, madam, and make it short. I am poisoned, and have no time to wait.

Donna Lucretia. Ah ! That cannot be. Ah, well, yes, Gennaro can kill me ! Is that possible ?

Gennaro. It is certain, madam, and I swear to God that if I were in your place, I would begin to pray in silence, with clasped hands, and on both knees. Hold ; here is an arm-chair which will do for that purpose.

Donna Lucretia. No! I tell you that it is impossible. No! among the most horrible ideas that ever entered my mind, this has never occurred to me. Well! well! You raise the knife! Stop, Gennaro, I have something to tell you.

Gennaro. Quick.

Donna Lucretia. Throw away your knife, wretch! Throw it away, I tell you! If you knew Gennaro, do you know who you are? Do you know who I am? You do not know how nearly I am related to you.—Must I tell him all? The same blood flows in our veins, Gennaro! Your father is John Borgia, Duke of Candia!

Gennaro. Your brother! Ah! you are my aunt!

Why, at the moment when Gennaro pronounces these words, are we always surprised, and a surprise which inclines us to laugh? We are surprised because, being pre-occupied with the announcement, *I am your mother!* which we expect from Lucrece with so much impatience, we are astonished and disappointed in hearing another word, because we are aware that, unless he be the son of Lucrece Borgia, Gennaro must be implacable against her; because this half-recognition is only a means invented by the poet to suspend the word which makes the terror of the situation, and this expedient is too apparent. It is not before this intermediate title of relationship that Gennaro would stop at this fatal moment. The error of Gennaro, who believes that Lucrece is his aunt, ought not to produce any change in the sentiments of the two characters. Lucrece is no less nearer death, and Gennaro is no less nearer parricide; therefore Gennaro, more enraged than ever, takes hold of Lucrece, and prepares to strike her. Is she about to speak? Is she ready to pronounce the solemn word, the only one which can save her—at this fatal moment the only one which can save Gennaro from committing parricide—the only one, in short, which can move and touch the spectator? No. In vain do we expect in this drama, full of crimes and the chastisements of hell—in vain do we expect a tear, a single one, which can move us to pity or calm our feelings. No! replies the remorseless enchanter, to me no pity, no tears! Here hearts are not affected, they only palpitate with terror.

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi che'ntrate.*

Abandon every hope, ye who enter here.

In *Semiramis*, Voltaire has been less violent: he has

* DANTE, Inferno 3.

mingled, as much as he could, pity with terror, wishing to touch the human heart on both sides, and to melt it into tenderness after having filled it with terror. When Semiramis, an adulteress and murderess, like Lucrece Borgia, recognizes her son in Arsace, and, in her son, the avenger of Ninus, whom she causes to be assassinated, the scene is terrible; but it becomes pathetic by virtue of the sacred names of mother and son:

Ah! I was without pity: be a barbarian in your turn,
exclaims Semiramis in despair—

Be the son of Ninus, in depriving me of life:
Strike. But what! your sobs are mingled with my tears!
O Ninias! O day full of horrors and delights!
Before giving me the death which you owe me,
Let the voice of nature still be heard:
Suffer at least the tears of your guilty mother
To bedew a hand so fatal and so dear.

Arsace (Ninias). Ah! I am your son; and it is not for you,
Whatever you have done, to embrace my knees.

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Act iv. scene 4.

See how pity succeeds to terror, and how hearts become melted after having trembled. See Zopire, in *Mahomet*, when assassinated by Seide—he drags himself over the stage, bleeding and pierced with stabs, and when Seide and Palmyra endeavor to sustain, detesting the crime which they had committed:

Strike your assassins,
say they;

I embrace my children,
exclaims Zopire, who knows the secret of their birth; and these simple words, *my children*, change also terror into pity.

These are the touching emotions of which the piece of Victor Hugo is divested, in suspending until the last word of the drama, the revelation of Lucrece Borgia.

The ancients wished that terror should be purged by pity; that is to say, that emotion should take repose after fright. They knew that man could not long endure terror. A single passion, a solitary sentiment, and especially that of horror, cannot make tragedy diverting; it is necessary that there

should be at least two sentiments placed in contrast with each other, so as to keep the soul in a state of excitement which would not be oppressive. We are willing that horror should strike and penetrate the soul, on condition that pity comes to alleviate the pain and pour its healing balm into the wound. Then, in succeeding, the two emotions temper each other; they lose what they have, the one too much harshness, the other too much tenderness.

We have so far only considered the subject of art. There remains the subject of morality, which is intimately connected with the former, and on which we will now make a few observations.

The author intended, he says in the preface of his drama, to repair the moral deformity of Lucrece Borgia by the beauty of the maternal sentiment; to use his own forcible expression, he intended to put the mother in the monster. We should here draw a distinction. We admire the tenderness which the most ferocious animals have for their young; and when the dying lioness covers her whelps with her body, wounded and bleeding, we are struck with admiration and the most touching emotions. But the woman who is a mother ought, in her tenderness for her children, to have more intelligence. Instinct does not suffice for her: she must have sentiment—the sentiment which does not exclude instinct, but which perfects and purifies it. Thus, when, at Florence, a mother threw herself in despair before the lion who had taken her child, and the animal, astonished at this despair, or comprehending it, deposited the child at the feet of its mother, it was instinct which urged on this mother; and it was, perhaps, also the instinct of the lion which responded to it. But these good instincts, whatever noble actions they may cause at certain moments, are only the germ and beginning of human virtues; and even that which distinguishes, in the most decided manner, the instincts from those virtues which are purely human, is that the former are barren and unfruitful, although strong. A good instinct lives near the side of a bad one without changing or purifying it, and without suffering itself to be infected or perverted. A single virtue in a vicious soul can convert it entirely to good; so a single vice in a virtuous soul can also entirely corrupt it. But instinct, even when it is good, supports without disquiet the presence of evil; and it is thus that, in *Lucrece Borgia*, the mother and the

monster are placed side by side, without, if we may so speak, either touching or combatting each other. But there is nothing less natural, and above all, less dramatic, than this mutual tolerance. Those characters, which are a mixture of good and evil, are only dramatic because in their soul the contrary sentiments struggle with each other before the eyes of the spectator. But, in Lucrece, where is the struggle between good and evil? At what moment is it that maternal virtue suddenly enlightens and purifies this soul lost in darkness? When is this marvellous and yet natural transfiguration made? And do you not believe that this moment of conversion will be the moment the least dramatic? Ah! if Lucrece Borgia dared for a moment to say to Gennaro, *my son*, do you not think that at this sacred word, which touches so many good sentiments, that all these sentiments, until then suppressed in the soul of Lucrece, would be aroused, and, as if by a sudden effort, drive away the impure passions which besieged it? Show us, then, this regeneration of a criminal soul accomplished in the sacred embraces of mother and son; show us how, at this sacred word, *I am your mother*, all the vices were put to flight which tormented this wretched heart. Then we would at once feel ourselves elevated and melted into pity, which is the most noble pleasure which the arts can give to man.

This is an extraordinary indication of the change which has been made in our moral ideas. Formerly the poets gave to their characters a single vice or a single passion, taking great care in other respects to make them virtuous, so that they may be considered worthy of interest; in our days the poets give to their heroes innumerable passions and vices with a single virtue as a counterpoise. Yet this weak and solitary virtue, is not charged with purifying the perverted soul where it is by chance preserved; it carefully respects the independence of the vices which are willing to suffer it near them; it is not even intrusted with inspiring the interest of the spectators, for it is vice which nowadays inspires interest, because they invest it with a certain noble and captivating air, which is taken from the heroes of Lord Byron, and which becomes so seductive to the public. Even vice is often sentimental and melancholy; it becomes interesting and affecting under the pretext that it preserves in its abasement something great and good. It seems, in fact,

that we have a taste for ruins in morals as in architecture, and that we love what is fallen, better than that which remains standing upright. Let us love what is still good and pure in perverted souls, as a testimony of human dignity, which can never be entirely destroyed ; but let us admire the ruin only in memory of the edifice, let us not value the rags more than the cloth ; in a word, let us take in crime what remains of virtue as an excuse, and let us not push the pity which inspires the excuse so far as to respect and even to admire it. The lesson which was inculcated by the ancient tragedy, such as Racine has conceived in his *Phædra*, was that one bad passion was alone sufficient to destroy the soul ; a severe and hard lesson, which makes man tremble at his frailty and which inspires him with a scrupulous and perpetual vigilance ; a lesson worthy of a Christian and of a pupil of Port Royal, as Racine was. The moral lesson which is taught by our modern dramas is, that only one good quality is sufficient to excuse many vices ; an indulgent lesson, and one which puts the heart of man very much at its ease.

XVII.

OF MATERNAL LOVE.—THE ORPHAN OF CHINA.

VOLTAIRE, in his *Orphan of China*, desired to place paternal and maternal love in opposition to each other, and to show the difference between the tenderness of a mother, always ready to sacrifice every thing to the life of her child, and that of the father who sacrifices his son to the duties which honor and the law impose upon him. This contrast is interesting. We only regret that, in Voltaire, this contrast is rather a discussion than a dramatic action.

The subject of the *Orphan of China*, is taken from a Chinese play, translated by father Premare, and published in 1735. In our days, this piece has been translated anew by Stanislas Julien. It is curious to compare the Chinese drama with the tragedy of Voltaire.

The Chinese drama is the entire life of the Orphan. "It is a barbarous rough-sketch," says Voltaire in the preface of his tragedy . . . "We might believe that we were reading the *Thousand and one Nights* in acts and scenes. But notwithstanding the incredible, it is full of interest, and notwithstanding the multitude of incidents, all is perspicuous." Voltaire did not say enough. There prevails in the Chinese drama an admirable unity of interest, and the author had the merit of knowing how to make the dangers of the Orphan interesting. The interest of the drama turns entirely upon a poor child whom it is necessary to save from death; and this interest suffices, without those romantic passions which Voltaire knew so well how to ridicule, when he does not employ them.

The cruel Tou-an-Kou has caused three hundred members of the family of Tchao to be exterminated. Tchao and his wife, who is pregnant, alone remain. Very soon Tchao receives an order from the Emperor to put himself to death.

He kills himself; but before dying, he enjoins it upon his wife, if she bears a son, to name him Tchao-chi-Kou-eul, that is: the Orphan of the family of Tchao, and so to manage it that he may escape from the persecutors of his race; for it is he who will finally revenge them all. The princess Tchao is delivered of a son, to whom she gives the name prescribed by her husband. But Tou-an-Kou, the enemy of Tchao, wishes to destroy the Orphan, and orders a proclamation to be issued, which punished with death whoever would rescue the Orphan from the prison in which the mother was confined. How can the escape of this child be effected, who was brought forth with pain and already threatened with death? An old secretary of the house of Tchao, the physician Tching-Ing, comes to visit the princess in her prison. She begs him to carry off her son. "If I succeed in carrying off your son secretly," says Tching-Ing, "and Tou-an-Kou comes to know it, he will ask you where is the little Orphan of the family of Tchao. You will answer: I have given him to Tching-Ing. I would die with all my family, it matters little to me; but do you believe that he will permit this tender infant to live?" Then in order to quiet the fears of Tching-Ing with regard to the secret, the princess kills herself. Thus Tching-Ing becomes the only prop of the house of Tchao, and he therefore alone will know the secret of the retreat in which the last scion of the family will be concealed. But he must leave the prison. The soldiers watch at the door, and Tching-Ing despairs of being able to elude their vigilance. Fortunately the General Han-Kioué, who commands them, is a generous and tender-hearted man and an old friend of the family of Tchao. This brave man, seeing Tching-Ing go from the prison with a basket full of herbs, at the bottom of which is concealed the little child, tells him to approach; and then ordering the soldier to retire, he takes the basket, removes the herbs, and discovers the child. This sight affects him and moves him to pity. "The forehead of the young child," he exclaims, "is bathed with perspiration. The corners of his mouth are still white with maternal milk. How frail and delicate are his limbs! He opens his little eyes and seems to recognize me. Although sad and suffering at the bottom of this basket, we might say that he endeavored to restrain his cries. This narrow prison in which he is inclosed, those little bands which tie him

down on all sides, prevent him from turning over his body, and stretching out his little feet." Tching-Ing at the same time begs him to spare this child; "so that one day, when he will have become great, he may protect the tombs of the family of the Tchao." "What shall I do?" says Han-Kioué. "I well know that if I deliver up this child to Tou-an-Kou, I will be rich and powerful, but I would be an infamous wretch Go then," said he to Tching-Ing, "and carry off this child." But Tching-Ing still hesitates. "If Han-Kioué were to repent! If, in order to be acquitted by Tou-an-Kou, who would be very angry in learning that the Orphan had escaped, he were to say that it was Tching-Ing who carried off and concealed this child! Tou-an-Kou would order Tching-Ing to be taken; he would have him put to death, and would also put to death the last descendant of the Tchao." Then in order to quiet the apprehensions of Tching-Ing, to save the Orphan, Han-Kioué kills himself in his turn. "You, Tching-Ing," says he to him, before killing himself, "watch day and night over this little orphan; let him constantly be the object of all your cares. This feeble scion will one day cause the house of Tchao to be revived; and when he will have become great, relate to him all that has passed. Do not fail to tell him to avenge his parents; and let him, above all, take care to forget my devotedness and my benefits!"

It is doubtless these two voluntary deaths, that of the Princess Tchao, and that of General Han-Kioué, which Voltaire describes in alluding to the stories from the *Thousand and one Nights*. In fact, these sacrifices, performed so quickly and so easily, that they almost cease to become heroic, these suicides which follow each other as if by imitation, are certainly strange, and we have need, in order that we may not be too much astonished, to remember the manners of Japan and China, and the inconceivable contempt which these people have for life. Voltaire has not failed, in his *Orphan*, to remember this peculiarity in their manners, and even to praise it:

Let us imitate the firmness of our haughty neighbors,

says Idamé to Zamti, her husband, in proposing to him to kill themselves in order to escape the yoke of Gengis-Khan:

They sustain the rights of human nature,
They live free among themselves, and die when they please.

An insult suffices to drive them to death,
And they dread infamy more than annihilation.

Act v. scene 5.

These accumulated instances of devotedness, as incredible as they may appear, are not contrary to the morals of the country in which the scene passes. Moreover, Voltaire was right in saying that in the Chinese piece, the incredible does not injure the interest of it. What, in fact, does the Chinese poet wish? He wishes to affect us by the fate of the infant. Is not the best way to interest us, to show us the devotedness which this helpless creature inspires? God has intended that children should possess a natural charm which makes us love them; for in order to live they require our tenderness and care. Infancy is pleasing and attractive by its simplicity and helplessness; and the Chinese poet was right to show in Han-Kioué, that men who have become hardened in the profession of arms are sensible to the charms of infancy. But when the infant, in addition to its natural attraction, is the last descendant of an illustrious and unfortunate race; when his life is menaced, and it becomes necessary to save him with great difficulty from dangers of which he is still ignorant, then the pity which he excites becomes greater, and pity may extend even to devotedness. These very instances of devotedness show the singular value which is attached to the life of the child. No; it cannot be an ordinary child whose cradle is surrounded by so many dangers and protected by so many wonderful sacrifices; he is scarcely born before his mother kills herself to insure the secret of his flight; and even the chief of the soldiers, whose duty it was to prevent this flight, touched with pity at the sight, kills himself in his turn, in order to escape from the cruel duty which the persecutor of the Tchao has imposed upon him. These are strange instances of devotedness, we must confess, but which at least possess the merit of being turned to the benefit of its dramatic interest.

There is in this Orphan more than one infant; there is a whole family. It is that which constitutes its strength. We know how sacred and holy was the family institution in China:

This empire destroyed, which ought to be immortal,
My lord, was founded upon paternal right,

says the Idamé of Voltaire to Gengis-Khan. It is well to say it; but it is still better to show, in the drama itself, how strong and powerful is the idea of a family, and how this idea controls and directs all. Why is this infant saved at the price of so many generous lives? In order that the family of the Tchao may not be entirely extinct—in order that the tombs of this family may not remain without some one who would preserve and honor them. The people who make of the family the foundation of society, do not only respect the family which is living, they also do honor to the family which is dead. And do not believe that in this traffic of respect which is rendered to fathers and ancestors, children give without ever receiving. No; the future is no where more prosperous than in those places where the past is revered; children are no where held more dear than in families where their ancestors are adored; and the cradle of the new-born is deemed still more sacred, if it is possible, than the tombs of their ancestors. Such is the cradle of the Orphan of the Tchao, a kind of domestic altar, where a mother and a friend are sacrificed in their turn, in order to save the perpetuity of the family of the Tchao. This perpetuity of the family is, if we may so speak, in the Chinese drama, the fatality of the antique tragedy; it directs and controls all its events; it takes the different personages of the drama, in their turn, and orders them to be sacrificed for the Orphan, and they are sacrificed. These instances of devotedness are accomplished with a calmness and a gravity which show that it is not prompted by passion, and that duty alone determines them. The devotedness of passion is violent, tumultuous, and ardent. They hasten on as if they feared lest they would never more recover themselves. The devotedness of duty is slow and deliberate.

Tching-Ing has saved the Orphan. He brings him, still inclosed in the basket, to an old family servant of the Tchao, Kong-Sun, who has retired to a little farm to end his days in repose. This scene is admirable. Tching-Ing and Kong-Sun both endeavor to find the safest means of securing the life of the Orphan.

I will soon be forty-five years of age, and I have a son, [*says Tching-Ing,*] who is not yet one month old. I will make him pass for the orphan of the family of the Tchao. You must denounce me to Tou-an-Kou; you will tell him that I have concealed the orphan;

and he will order me to be put to death, with my son. Then, my lord, you will educate the orphan with care, so that when he shall have become large and strong, he may avenge the death of his father and mother. Is not that an excellent idea?

Kong-Sun. It must be twenty years yet, before this child can avenge his parents. With twenty years more, you will have sixty-five years; and I, with twenty more, will have ninety. By this time, I will have been long since dead. How can I teach him to avenge the family of the Tchao? Tching-Ing, since you consent to sacrifice your son, give him to me, and go to denounce me to Tou-an-Kou; tell him that Kong-Sun-Tchou-Kieou has concealed the orphan in the farm of Taiping. Tou-an-Kou will come at the head of his soldiers; he will take me and put me to death, with your son. You will bring up in secret the little orphan of the house of Tchao, until he will have become large enough to avenge the death of his father and mother. Is not that an excellent idea?

Tching-Ing. I am of your opinion; but how shall I dare to cause your destruction? My lord, take my son; cover him with the garments of the little orphan of the family of the Tchao, and go to denounce me to Tou-an-Kou. I will die with my son, and you will be delivered from all misfortune.

Kong-Sun. Tching-Ing, I have pledged you my word; do not doubt my resolution. In twenty years, this orphan must avenge his father and mother. I will then die content; but I daily fear that I may be taken off, and my death would destroy all the hopes which are founded upon him.

Tching-Ing. My lord, you are still full of health and vigor.

Kong-Sun. My strength is not what it was once. When I will save this tender child, how can I live long enough to witness his glorious exploits? You cannot become old as soon as me. It is for you to put yourself forward, to show your courage and devotedness to the family of the Tchao. Tching-Ing, follow my advice. In truth, my life is so frail and uncertain, that I can scarcely prolong it to hear the evening drum, or the morning bell.

Tching-Ing. My lord, you were tranquil and happy in your house, and the imprudent Tching-Ing has come, without reason, to compromise you, and to involve you in a web of anguish and sorrows. This is what torments and overwhelms me.

Kong-Sun. What do you say, Tching-Ing? I am now sixty years of age. If I die, it will not be an unusual thing, and it matters little whether it be this morning or this evening.

What calmness in this deliberation, in which two men examine whose death will best subserve the interest of the Orphan! As to his own son, whom Tching-Ing sacrifices to the Orphan, it is a point resolved upon. Therefore we see no hesitation, and no murmurs. Tching-Ing does not

for a moment think of showing the pain which he feels in making this terrible sacrifice ; Kong-Sun does not any longer think of praising him for his courage. This firmness, you will say, is repugnant to nature ; it is particularly so to those family affections, so dear, as they pretend, to the Chinese. We will take the liberty of making one reflection upon this subject. In societies, where families have affection as their ruling principle, no one thinks it his duty to sacrifice himself for the safety of another family. All are on an equality, and the son of the peasant is as dear to his parents as the son of a king. This is not the case in societies where the family, without ceasing to be an affection, has become an institution, and where the laws aid in the preservation of property, and especially in the perpetuity of associations. It is then that the principle of the family has all its force, and all its power. But it is curious to observe the effects of this power ; for its first effect is to introduce inequality among the different families. With us, where the laws do not consecrate the worship of ancestors, and where they prescribe the division of property among all the children, the family goes back to the grandfather, and descends to the grandson. Beyond this point is the darkness of the past and the future, which no one wishes to penetrate. This brevity of families is the principal cause of their equality. In China, on the contrary, where the laws make a religion of the respect of ancestry, families have the time to grow and increase, and the inequality has the means of developing itself. Thus families are easily made subordinate to each other, and the subordination extends even to devotedness. The son of Tching-Ing, a poor servant, is not of as much consideration as the Orphan of the Tchao, and his father condemns him, without hesitation, to die for the Orphan. It is thus that the power of the family as an institution is manifested, especially in the sacrifice of the family, as affection.

In our opinion, Tching-Ing sacrifices his son too easily. We would wish, at least, that he would hesitate ; we would wish to see how much it costs his tenderness. Voltaire has not failed to exhibit the struggles of paternal tenderness. Zamti wishes to give up his son in the place of the Orphan ; but what hesitations ! what combats !

Zamti. Let us go ; it is no longer permitted me to retreat.

Etan. I see the tears flow from your sorrowful eyes.

Alas! the cruel attacks of so many misfortunes
Still leave room for fresh tears to flow!

Zamti. The decree has gone forth! nothing can change it.

Etan. They pass on; and this child, who is a stranger to you . .

Zamti. Stranger! He, my king!

Etan. Our king was his father;

I know it, and groan. Speak, what must I do?

Zamti. They watch my steps here; I have little liberty.

Avail yourself of your obscurity.

You know what is the asylum of this sacred deposit;

You are not observed; access is easy to you.

Let us for some time conceal this precious child

In the midst of the tombs, which were built by his ancestors.

We will send back to the chief of Corea,

This tender scion of an adored family.

He can at least carry off from our cruel conquerors,

This unfortunate child, the object of their terrors;

He can save my king; I take the rest upon myself.

Etan. And what will become of you, without this fatal pledge?

What can you reply to the enraged conqueror?

Zamti. I have wherewith to satisfy his ferocity.

Etan. You, my lord?

Zamti. O nature! O tyrannical duty!

Etan. Well!

Zamti. Seize my only son in his cradle.

Etan. Your son!

Zamti. Think of the king whom you must preserve.

Take my son . . . let his blood . . . I cannot go on.

Etan. Ah! do you order me!

Zamti. Respect my tenderness,

Respect my misfortune, and especially my weakness;

Oppose no obstacle to this sacred order,

And fulfil your duty, after having sworn it.

Act i. scene 6.

Is Zamti, in exhibiting his paternal anguish, more dramatic than Tching-Ing, in concealing it from us? Here, every thing depends upon the aim of the author. In Voltaire, the interest turns upon the sacrifice which Zamti makes; it is with Zamti and Idamé that we become interested. Will they consent to give up their son to save the life of the Orphan? When Zamti shall have resolved upon this terrible sacrifice, will Idamé permit him to accomplish it? This is the real subject of the tragedy of Voltaire, for we are very little interested in the Orphan of China. In the Chinese author, on the contrary, it is upon this Orphan that turns all the

interest of the drama ; it is he who must be saved, at any price ; and the author has well understood that if he showed how much it costs Tching-Ing to sacrifice his son, the spectators would be so much the less interested in the Orphan as they would be the more affected by the grief of Tching-Ing.

We still remark another difference. In Voltaire, the principal object is to save the last heir of the kings, and it is to his monarchical loyalty that Zamti sacrifices his son. This sentiment could be understood upon our stage. In the Chinese author, the Orphan of the Tchao is not the scion of a royal race, and the last heir of the throne ; he is only the last descendant of an old and powerful family. The safety of the state is not attached to his life ; and neither patriotism nor monarchical loyalty are interested in saving his life. The fidelity of his servant, (we had almost said his vassal, so near do the feudal customs resemble the Chinese play,) the gratitude of the old friends of the family ; in a word, the idea of perpetuating the family of the Tchao, in order that the tombs of his family may always receive their accustomed honors and libations ; this is what protects the Orphan, and inspires so many generous sentiments in his favor.

We have seen Tching-Ing and Kong-Sun deliberating upon the plan which they are to follow in saving the Orphan of the Tchao. This plan has been adopted : Tching-Ing goes to denounce Kong-Sun to Tou-an-Kou, who causes the child to be put to death, whom he finds in the house of Kong-Sun, and whom he believes to be the Orphan of the Tchao, when it is only the son of Tching-Ing. Kong-Sun kills himself in his turn, so that the secret of this substitution of one child for another may not be made known ; and Tou-an-Kou, wishing to reward Tching-Ing for his denunciation, adopts, as his heir, this pretended son of Tching-Ing, that is to say, the Orphan of the Tchao himself, who is educated in the house of the persecutor of his family. When this son has reached the age of twenty years, Tching-Ing reveals to him the secret of his birth. Although, in this scene of recognition, there is no longer any point of comparison with the tragedy of Voltaire, we will cite some portions of it, because it is curious and touching. Tching-Ing has painted the adventures of the family of the Tchao, and of the Orphan, and has deposited them in the office of the Orphan. The Orphan finds them, and demands an explanation from Tching-Ing. Then Tching-

Ing, taking each painting, relates, with solemn slowness, the history which it retraces, and terminates his recital with these words: "Twenty years have elapsed since these events have occurred. The little Orphan of the family of the Tchao is now arrived at the age of twenty years. If he cannot avenge the death of his father and mother, what is he good for? He is endowed with a lofty nature, and his countenance expresses an imposing majesty. He shines in literature, and excels in the art of war. What does he expect to do? All his family have been exterminated, without distinction of rank; his mother has been hung in her lonely palace, and his father has stabbed himself on the place of execution. Nevertheless, these mortal injuries have never been avenged. It is in vain that their son passes for a hero in the world."

Orphan. You spoke to me a long time since, and yet your son is still like a man who sleeps or who dreams. In truth, I understand nothing of all this.

Tching-Ing. What! You do not understand me yet! Hear me: The man clad in red is the infamous minister, Tou-an-Kou; Tchao is your father, and the princess is your mother. I have related to you every event of this melancholy history. If you do not understand it perfectly now, well! I am the old Tching-Ing, who sacrificed my son to save the orphan; and it is you, *you*, who are the orphan of the family of the Tchao!

Orphan. Heavens! What, I am the orphan of the family of the Tchao! I die with anger.

As soon as he is recognized, the Orphan of the Tchao kills Tou-an-Kou; and the emperor, who has recognized the crimes of Tou-an-Kou, approves his death, and restores to the Orphan all the property of his family.

Such is the Chinese drama, in which the author has known how to interest us without any other resource than the perils of a child in the cradle. Voltaire did not believe that he could make a tragedy out of so simple a subject, and he had recourse to other means; sometimes to the passion of Gengis-Khan, and at other times to the struggle between Zamti and Idamé, the one wishing to give up his son in order to save the Orphan, the other refusing to make a like sacrifice. This struggle between paternal love, which yields to a superior duty and maternal love, more instinctive and strong, which does not know a more sacred duty than that of saving a son, makes the interest of the two first acts of the French tragedy.

At the moment when the Tartars went to sacrifice the son of Zamti, Idamé tears him away from them, crying out that they deceived them, and that he was not the son of the king. The Tartars believed it, for, as Osman says, in verses which smack of the philosopher rather than the Tartar,

His eyes, his presence, his voice, his sobs, his clamors,
His intrepid fury in the midst of his tears,
All seem to announce, by this grand character,
The cry of nature and the heart of a mother.

Act ii. scene 7.

Very soon Idamé herself arrives, furious, desperate, reproaching her husband for the cruel sacrifice which he wished to make; and then commences the opposition between the sentiments of the father and those of the mother. Mind, says Zamti,

Mind to save your king.

Idamé. I must sacrifice my son!

Zamti. Such is our misfortune.

You are a citizen before being a mother.

Idamé. What! Has nature so little power over you?

Zamti. She has too much of it, but less than my duty:
And I owe more to the blood of my unfortunate master,
Than to this obscure child, to whom I have given birth.

Idamé. No; I do not know this horrible virtue.

I have seen our walls in ashes, and this throne overturned;
I have wept over the frightful disgraces of our kings;
But by what still more lamentable madness
Do you wish, by hastening the death of your wife,
To sacrifice the blood of a son whom they do not wish.
These buried kings, now mingled with the dust,
Are they gods to you, whose thunder you dread?
To these powerless gods, sleeping in their tombs,
Have you made a vow to sacrifice your son?
Alas! great and small, subjects and monarchs,
Distinguished for a moment by trivial works,
Equal by nature, equal by misfortune,
Each mortal is burdened with his own grief.

Go: the name of subject is not more sacred to us
Than those sacred names of father and husband.
Nature and marriage, these are the first laws,
The duties, the ties of whole nations.

These laws proceed from the gods; the rest are human.

Act ii. scene 3.

What fault do we find with this piece? The sentiments are not false; they are declamatory. The fault of declamation is, that it takes away, even from true sentiments; the accents of truth. Can Zamti and Idamé, when their son is ready to perish, enter into a discussion with regard to the duties of a citizen and a father? The sentiments which Idamé expresses are those of a mother, but of a mother who reflects and who moralizes upon her feelings. But nothing can be more ill-timed than the analyzing of the passion at the critical moment of the play. The passion which knows the secret of its own emotion, and which explains the cause of it, is no longer a passion; as it proceeds from the mind, it is to the mind also that it addresses itself; the heart no longer gives audience. We are aware that Idamé does not proclaim the equality of men before death, so as to dispense with sacrificing her son for the safety of the Orphan. We are, nevertheless, constrained by the sententious tone of this discussion. The philosophical contest between paternal tenderness, which yields to a superior duty, and maternal tenderness, which is a supreme law for Idamé, concludes by interesting us more than the peril of the son of Idamé and the royal Orphan. We weigh the opposite arguments; we inquire, in our turn, if it is better, in such a moment, to be a citizen or a father; we read a treatise on duties instead of witnessing a tragedy.

XVIII.

OF THE PERVERSION OF MATERNAL LOVE—CLEOPATRA IN THE *RODOGUNE* OF CORNEILLE—THE COQUETTE MOTHER OF QUINAULT.

HOWEVER strong and ardent maternal love may be, there are nevertheless passions which extinguish it; there are mothers who forget nature; there are ambitious or coquetish women, who no longer remember that they are mothers. Such is, in *Rodogune*, the Cleopatra of Corneille; such is *The Coquette Mother* of Quinault.

We may remark that it is only the bad passions which attack and shake maternal love. The good respect it, for all the virtues aid and sustain, instead of combating each other. Religious enthusiasm itself does not destroy maternal love. We read in the acts of the martyrs that Saint Perpetua, having at last succeeded in having her child with her in her prison, "The prison," says she, "immediately became to me a palace, so that I preferred this abode to any that they could have chosen for me." These are touching words, and manifest the harmony which exists between piety and the sweetest affections of the human heart. It is otherwise with ambition and vanity. They drive away maternal love from the heart of which they take possession; and vanity, mean and contemptible as it is in its nature, is not in this respect less imperious and tyrannical than ambition itself. Ismene, in *The Coquette Mother*, is not less heartless than Cleopatra in *Rodogune*.

The character of Cleopatra in Corneille, is odious from one end of the piece to the other; it inspires nothing but horror. Never a single emotion of maternal tenderness, never a single remorse is felt by this mother, who wishes her two sons to perish in order to destroy her rival; never

is nature reclaimed in her heart ; and when she exhibits it, it is to do violence to it, and sacrifice it to her ambition and her revenge :

And you, you wish me
The ridiculous return of a foolish virtue,
A tenderness as dangerous as it is importunate ?
I do not wish for a son the husband of Rodogune,
And I no longer see in him the remains of my blood,
If he drives me from the throne and puts her in my rank.
Act v. scene 1.

Nevertheless, the sweet and natural sentiments have their part in Rodogune, and pity is contrasted with horror. The touching and pure affection which the two brothers feel for each other, and the interest which it excites, compensate for the dread which Cleopatra inspires. What we admire in this tragedy is : that where the good sentiments disappear in the mother, they reappear in the two brothers, and fraternal love comes to make amends to us for the forgetfulness of maternal tenderness. Thus the sweet and pure emotions recover their ascendant, and the spectator is not condemned to the torment of finding nothing which is worthy of esteem and pity ; he is disposed to pity these two brothers, who, terrified at their both loving Rodogune and finding themselves rivals, promise each other never to be wanting in fraternal friendship :

Notwithstanding the splendor of a throne and the love of a woman,
Let us cause friendship to reign so powerfully in our souls,
That extinguishing in their loss a corrupting regret,
Let us find our happiness in fraternal love.

Act. i. scene 3.

This noble and touching friendship of the two brothers resists the efforts which Cleopatra makes. She in vain endeavors to arm them against each other ; they repel her odious counsels. Cleopatra, desperate at seeing the virtue of her sons thwart her schemes of revenge and ambition, not being able to count upon them either to strike Rodogune, or to destroy each other, relies only upon herself ; for she does not think of renouncing her hatred or her ambition, she does not think of becoming a mother again. She feigns it for a moment, but only that she may more effectually destroy her enemies, that is to say, her rival and her children. She

braves every thing, the vengeance of the gods and the vengeance of men. Let us hear this invocation of hatred and anger, the most terrible which the Theatre has ever witnessed :

I must either condemn, or crown my hatred.
 Were the people in madness for its new masters
 To water their tombs with my odious blood,
 Were the Parthian avenger to find me defenceless,
 Were Heaven to equal the punishment to my offence,
 I would never consent to abandon the throne !
 It would be better to die by a stroke of lightning,
 It would be better to merit the strangest fate.
 Let Heaven fall upon me, provided I'm avenged !
 I would receive the blow with a calm visage !
 It is sweet to perish after our enemies.
 And with whatever rigor destiny treats me,
 I lose less in dying than in living their subject.

Act v. scene 1.

Never were ambition, anger, revenge, all the passions which can devour the human heart, expressed with more grandeur and energy. Let us not forget, however, and it is here that the thought returns of the observations which we are making with regard to maternal love ; the title of mother which Cleopatra preserves, although she so cruelly forgets it, this same title, in rendering it more criminal, contributes to render it more terrible, and lends to her passions a terrible grandeur worthy of tragedy. If Cleopatra were not a mother, she would immediately lose a part of the tragic horror which she inspires. She would be no more than an ordinary ambitious woman ;—she would be only an angry and vindictive woman. It is necessary, in order to terrify us, that we should remember those maternal sentiments which she has extinguished ; and the sacred title of mother is still felt even where it is destroyed.

But if Corneille avails himself, as a tragic poet, of this title of mother, which renders Cleopatra more frightful, he has also taken care to inform us that, in those courts of Asia, which he has understood and painted with so much penetration, in those countries where the family tie is loosened and destroyed by polygamy, their morals and usages diminish the strength of maternal sentiments. One is no longer son, husband, or father ; one is king ; one is neither daughter nor

mother ; one is queen. Egotism controls the affections of nature, and it is that which Corneille explains to us, by the mouth of Seleucus, with that political sagacity which is one of the peculiarities of his genius :

Ah, my brother, love is not very strong
For sons brought up in exile ;
And, having brought us up almost in slavery,
She [*Cleopatra*] has remembered them only to increase her rage.
I discover the disguise of her pretended tears ;
We have in her heart but little part ;
She is wise in proclaiming this great love of a mother ;
But she loves and considers only herself ;
And although she exhibits a language so sweet,
She does all for herself and nothing for us.

Act ii. scene 4.

Although there is a kind of resemblance between ambition and coquetry, and both of them have the same need of succeeding, or of pleasing, there is, nevertheless, a great difference between the coquette mother of Quinault and the *Cleopatra* of Corneille. They resemble each other only in one point ; passion extinguishes maternal love in them. The *Ismene* of Quinault is neither hateful nor vindictive ; she only suffers in seeing her daughter each day become more beautiful near her, who each day remains more beautiful with difficulty. She would be a good mother, if her daughter were only ten or twelve years old ; but she is sixteen ; it is that which displeases her. See how, in the conversation between *Ismene* and *Laurette*, her confidant, all those secret vexations of a woman who does not wish to seem to be old, naturally break out.

Ismene. With what eye can I see (I who, by my address,
Believe that I could pique myself on my youth,)
An adored daughter, and who, in spite of my cares,
Obliges me to confess that I have thirty years at least.
And as to judge harshly people are too much disposed,
If we acknowledge thirty years, do they not believe that we are
forty ?

Laurette. It is true that the world is full of slanderers ;
But we can still be beautiful at forty years.

Ismene. We can be ; but it is the age of retirement ;
Beauty loses its rights, even though it were perfect ;
And gallantry, as soon as we become old,
Is only confined to the beauty of the mind.

Laurette. You are too well made, and it is a mere notion.

Ismene. A daughter at sixteen years easily outshines a mother.
I in vain endeavor, by a thousand cares, to re-establish
Whatever charms my age can diminish,
And to preserve, by art, the natural beauty
Which is derived from youth, and which passes away with it.
My daughter destroys all as soon as she is near me;
I feel myself become ugly as soon as she is near me;
And youth in her, and simple nature,
Do more than all my art, my cares, and my dress.
Was there ever a subject of a more just anger?

Act ii. scene 2.

But we do not perceive in this the violent passions which move or irritate us, but only ridiculous ones, which make us laugh. The heart of *Ismene* is not corrupt; she is good and amiable with all the world; she is only in bad humor with the sixteen years of her daughter. Moreover, *Ismene* believes herself a widow. Her husband has been absent for eight years, without any one having heard from him. They believe him to be dead, and even *Ismene* puts on mourning. Hence the temptation which she felt to take a young husband, for her husband was old and ugly. This young husband, whom she has already chosen, is *Acanthe*, the son of her neighbor. But *Acanthe* loves *Isabelle*, the daughter of *Ismene*; he has only fallen out with *Isabelle*, as lovers quarrel; and it is by the aid of this quarrel, artfully kept up by the intrigue and trickery of *Laurette*, one of those rare waiting-maids in comedy who do not take part with the daughter against the mother; it is by means of this quarrel that *Ismene* hopes to replace her daughter *Isabelle* in the heart of *Acanthe*. She agrees with the father of *Acanthe*, who, although old and ugly, would also wish to marry the young *Isabelle*, in bartering, if we may so speak, with their children. *Cremante* will marry *Isabelle*, *Acanthe* will marry *Ismene*. All that is wanting to this agreement is the consent of *Acanthe*, and *Acanthe* does not refuse. But, (and it is above all there that the comedy breaks out,) in the scene in which *Acanthe* consents to marry *Ismene*, he only speaks to her of *Isabelle*, of the love which he had for *Isabelle*, and the treachery with which he believes that she has repaid his tenderness. In a word, his passion for *Isabelle* breaks out at each word, and inflicts upon the vanity of *Ismene* the most cruel and the most just torment which vanity can suffer, the torment of seeing itself forgotten and despised; and that without *Acanthe*

seeming to 'wish it, for it is in spite of him that he forgets Ismene, who is present; it is in spite of him that he always remembers Isabelle, absent. This scene is truly worthy of the great masters of comedy :

Acanthe. After the unworthy love with which his heart is blackened,

I seek to avenge myself; it is all that I can hope.

Laurette. If I can serve you in marrying the mother,
I offer you my cares, and without disguise

Acanthe. But can I not avenge myself otherwise ?

Laurette. No, sir, I know

Act iv. scene 7.

At this moment Ismene appears, and Laurette declares to her that Acanthe has just revealed his secret feelings. It is you and not Isabelle, says she to Ismene,

It is you he wishes to love, it is you . . .

Acanthe. Ah ! the faithless !

Ismene. You still think of my daughter, sir.

Acanthe. Me, madam, think of her ! Could I be so base !
Would you believe me capable of such meanness ?

Laurette. No, it is to do him a wrong ; that is not credible ;
Whatever a fit of anger may have induced him to say,
He certainly wishes to think only of you.

Acanthe. Madam, it is certain ; never, I confess it,
Has love caused me to love with so much tenderness,
Never was there inspired by the heart of a lover,
Any thing comparable to my ardor ;
Never was there any thing equal to the pure, lively, faithful passion,
With which my charmed soul adored Isabelle.
You see, nevertheless, how I am treated.

Ismene. Youth, sir, is only a levity.
In quitting infancy, a soul is little capable
Of the solidity of a reasonable love ;
A heart is not sufficiently mature at sixteen years,
And the great art of loving requires a little more time.
It is after the errors in which youth is engaged,
While it is returning from vain amusements,
Which divert the mind from true attachments,
It is then that one can make a choice with safety ;
And that is properly the age of constancy.
A mind until then is not well regulated,
Nor have hearts their maturity in love.

Acanthe. But, madam, after all, who would have believed it of
Isabelle ?

Isabelle inconstant ! Isabelle faithless !

Isabelle treacherous, and without caring

Ismene. What ! Always Isabelle !

Acanthe. Ah ! it is to forget her ;

And I wish, if it is possible, in my extreme chagrin,

To tear from my heart her very name,

I wish to leave nothing of what was agreeable to me.

Thanks to Heaven, I have accomplished it.

Laurette. It is very well done for you.

Acanthe. Judge for yourself, madam, and tell me

If there is any thing so black as this perfidy ;

After so many oaths, and so tenderly made,

Always to love each other, never to change,

Isabelle now, this same Isabelle

Madam, you will oblige me by never mentioning her name.

Ismene. It is you who speak to me of it.

Act iv. scene 8.

We must acknowledge that Moliere, in these scenes of quarrels and amorous reconciliations which he has so often represented on the stage, has never more admirably expressed love, and those emotions of a heart which permits its secret to escape at the very moment when it seems most desirous to conceal it.

Isabelle does not treat the old Cremante better than Acanthe treats Ismene, and she is not more malicious. Her love for Acanthe breaks out in spite of her before Cremante, and punishes him for his ridiculous pretensions. In fine, the reconciliation between the two lovers is made in the presence of Cremante, and by the aid of the reproaches of infidelity which they make towards each other.

The reconciliation having been made between the two lovers, the play must conclude ; but the denouement is made in the side scene. Ismene has recovered her husband ; he has unexpectedly returned. She is then no longer a widow ; she can no longer marry Acanthe ; she can hereafter recommence to love her daughter, who is no longer her rival ; she may again become a good mother. This is what Laurette has announced to the two lovers ; for Ismene does not reappear, and we think well of Quinault for having spared this mother the pain of reappearing after her disappointment ; he desired that Ismene should be ridiculous, but not that she should be despised ; and he has respected the maternal character in the very fault which he has given it.

We have examined the different expressions which the dramatic art has given to maternal love, from Euripides to our own days. Among the personages which art has taken as types of this sentiment, the most ancient is the purest. The Andromache of Homer is the most perfect model of maternal tenderness and grief, and she preserves this character upon the ancient and modern stage, in Euripides and in Racine. Racine himself gives to maternal tenderness a more delicate expression than his predecessors; his Andromache has the purity and the sweetness of Christian widows. Merope is more violent in her grief than Andromache; but she is not less pure, she is not less honored, and her virtues add to her misfortunes to make us pity her and to make us love her. Idamé herself, in the *Orphan of China*, has the same kind of dignity; and although she deals too much in philosophical maxims, yet she at the same time inspires us with pity and esteem; for she has, in addition to maternal love, all the virtues which do honor to a woman; she is faithful to her husband—she prefers rather to perish with him than to reign with Gengis-Khan. We may then still take Idamé as the model of maternal love. Let us not forget it; the idea which we have of this love is an idea of virtue, and we do not lend ourselves with a good grace to the belief that a poisoner can be a good mother, and that we can love her. We should take care lest we confound astonishment and even the interest which we sometimes feel for a wicked person who has one good sentiment, with the natural attraction with which virtue inspires us. In the one, what remains of good surprises us and pleases us as an unexpected evidence of human dignity; virtue, on the contrary, charms us, and we abandon ourselves without fear to the pleasure of loving it. We are desirous, at the Theatre, of being sometimes kept in suspense; we wish to hesitate for a moment between good and evil; but it is necessary that a sentiment should come which controls and fixes our heart; in short, it is necessary to the discussions of the drama, that there should be a moral conclusion which will satisfy the conscience. Show us, then, a character whom we can in the denouement love or hate at our pleasure. In *Rodogune*, Cleopatra inspires us with horror, but this horror is not troubled by any scruple, for Corneille has not represented Cleopatra as a woman who continues good, notwithstanding her crimes; he has not done

violence to the idea which we have of maternal love ; he has not compelled us to detest the woman and love the mother in the same person.

In *Lucrece Borgia*, on the contrary, the poisoner remains constantly by the side of the mother, and the author has wished, until the denouement, to make us love the one and hate the other. The human heart cannot accommodate itself to this dividing of its sentiments ; it does not go to the Theatre to remain neutral and uncertain ; it wishes to conclude by taking a part ; it wishes to end in a decisive emotion of hatred or pity. This kind of satisfaction is wanting in *Lucrece Borgia* ; and in violating this law of moral unity, which is so closely connected with unity of action and interest, the poet has at the same stroke perverted the expression of maternal love. In vain he has exaggerated and magnified this love, and has taken away from it the virtuous efficacy which we are accustomed to attribute to it. If *Lucrece Borgia* is a good mother, she cannot be the impious and wicked woman which you show us. This is what the human conscience silently exclaims, and for this reason she protests against the efforts which the dramas and romances have made for the last twenty years in order to make it approve those strange combinations of virtue and vice ; and as there is no literature which can continue to exist without the approbation of conscience, these improbable personages who act in opposition to the moral laws of the human heart, have fallen by degrees into discredit. They are tired of the Grandisons because they were too virtuous, but they are also tired of the Lovelaces, especially since the Lovelaces have piqued themselves, as those in our days, on their great virtues, and have pretended to inspire esteem and admiration. The fault of the literature of our times is that it has treated with levity this desire which we all feel of esteeming what we love. It wished to create types of our sentiments, and it has created them contrary to the moral laws of the human mind ; it wishes to make an ideal—for the object of all literature is to give to man an ideal representation of himself ; but this ideal of good and evil, these models of our sentiments, these types of our affections, it has taken them in their exceptions or in fancy, instead of taking them in the true moral nature of man. It is for this cause that it has failed.

We will take the liberty of adding to this idea some general observations which relate to it.

XIX.

LITERATURE OFTEN EXPRESSES THE STATE OF THE IMAGINATION OF A PEOPLE, RATHER THAN THE STATE OF ITS SOCIETY.

WE have endeavored to compare the manner in which the most general sentiments of the human heart have been represented at different epochs; and we fear that in spite of what we have said, this comparison has been unfavorable to modern society. The expression of four or five principal sentiments of the human heart, which are the subject of the dramatic art, seems in our days to have lost its ancient truth. It has become violent, exaggerated, and affected; grief has fallen into melancholy, tenderness into sensibility, meditation into revery; every where the shadow, if we may so speak, has taken the place of the body: the shadow, it is true, greater and more supple than the substance, but more empty and uncertain.

“Et sol crescentes decedens duplicat umbras.”*

Is the change of expression a sign of a change of the most general sentiments of the human heart? Do men nowadays love life in a more cowardly and effeminate manner, than they did in former times, because *Catarina*, in the *Tyrant of Padua*, is less resigned than Iphigenia, in Euripides or in Racine? Are paternal and maternal love less noble and less ardent nowadays than formerly, because *Lucrece Borgia* and *Father Goriot* love their children with an affection less pure and refined, than Merope and Don Diego? Are there no longer any genuine and natural griefs, because our novels abound in false despairs? In a word, is literature nowadays the true expression of society? This is the question upon which we propose to make a few remarks.

* VIRGIL, *Ecl.* 2. v. 67.

Ours is certainly not the age of violent and inordinate passions. Yet, if we were to judge from our literature, never did the passions seem to be held in higher esteem. Our Theatrical heroes all seem to aim at expressing great energy of feeling, and it is for this reason that they are so pleasing. We adore ardent and passionate characters, we deify vice itself, if it has a bold and defiant air; in our romances, the lovers are enthusiastic and full of passion, the young ladies are dreamy and melancholy. In the world, however, marriages are daily more and more made from considerations of convenience and interest. Society, in a word, writes and speaks in one way, and acts in another; and the most sure way to mistake it, is to take it at its word.

Shall we say that society is hypocritical, because it speaks differently from the manner in which it acts? No! Hypocrisy mimics virtue; here, on the contrary, society seems to affect the faults which it does not possess. It is its grimaces which slander it, and its actions which absolve it; for it acts better than it speaks, and even better than it thinks.

This discrepancy between the society which speaks or writes, and the society which acts, is a fruitful source of errors and mishaps; for society inwardly laughs at the dupes who wish to put in action, in ordinary life, this ardent and passionate morality, which is good only in circulating libraries. It does with morality, what the free-thinking Abbés of the eighteenth century did with religion, who laughed at the Church and yet lived by it; it does what the public does, who, at the Theatre, laughs at marriage, and yet marries itself. If, however, any one makes too visible a breach of morality in his actions, society does not hesitate to apply to him the penalties of the Penal Code; it punishes him for having believed in paradoxes, the very paradoxes which it encourages; and what is remarkable, it often punishes more than it disapproves, especially if the offender exhibits great effrontery and no repentance. Effrontery, in our eyes, passes for a kind of heroism; so certain is it that in losing the relish for the true, we at the same time lose the sentiment of the great! A criminal who knows how to produce effect, is scarcely considered guilty; the crime disappears in the curiosity which the man inspires; and if we condemn him at the assizes, we speak of him in the drawing-room with so much interest, that his notoriety almost makes him pass for innocent.

How shall we express this singular state of a society, where the taste and love of depravity are rather a literary mania, than a moral malady? You yourselves remember the time when, in the *Festin de Pierre*, the young and bold Don Juan, tired of seeing his age attribute his passions to him as a crime, determines to take the mask of hypocrisy, as being the most sure and convenient manner of being a libertine with impunity. Don Juan becomes a pupil of Tartuffe, this holy man of pious words and modest looks. This hypocrisy of Don Juan is, like that of Tartuffe, an involuntary homage rendered, we do not say to the manners, but at least to the moral opinions, of his age. In our days, all is changed. Don Juan can no longer be tempted to take the part of Tartuffe; it would ruin him. If he has ardent and lively passions, he must show them; let him exhibit them openly, and above all, let him preach them before the public; for vice in our days, if it wishes to succeed, must not be content with enjoying itself alone; it must propagate its doctrines and make a school of them. Society applauds his indiscretions while he speaks, while he makes dramas and romances. But let him not undertake to put his maxims into practice; let him not be so indiscreet as to act as he speaks. Our society approves of Don Juan only at the Theatre; it dreads him and frowns upon him in the world; a strange contradiction, which Don Juan does not understand. "What!" says he, "what I have wished to do once, I have said it a hundred times, and you have applauded me!—It is true.—I have laughed a hundred times at the faithfulness of wives and the honor of husbands, and you have laughed with me!—It is true.—I am become the defender of the young girls who believed themselves sacrificed, and of young men of genius who were not appreciated, and you have encouraged me!—It is true.—Why then now, strange people that you are, why this secret repugnance which I feel against myself? Why this abandonment of me, which I do not understand?" We will tell you, Don Juan; but we do not know if you will understand us. Our society lives and is sustained by the aid of the last virtue which remains to reasoning people, viz. *inconsequence*. Men choose their wives otherwise than their heroines, and their sons-in-law otherwise than their tribunes and their prophets; they are more prudent in their affairs than in their ideas. If you wish to succeed, Don Juan, be always a dra-

ma or a poem, never seek to be a man of the world ; otherwise M. Dimanche, whom you laughed at so much formerly, M. Dimanche will laugh at you, now especially that he is elector, deputy, or minister ; and you, on your side, are no longer a gentleman, since that character no longer exists, and you are only a man of genius, since they are so common.

Thus, so far from modern literature representing faithfully the condition of society, we might believe that it did the reverse, so much does society belie itself by its morals and its actions. Shall we therefore say that society has contributed nothing to literature ? No : these unbridled passions, these hideous characters, these extraordinary and outrageous crimes which constitute the staple of our literature, have been taken from the thoughts, if not from the manners of our society ; from our imagination, if not from our character.

We now come to the second point of view, which we propose to explain.

In literature, there are two kinds of sentiments, and these correspond to the two different phases of the literary history of a nation. There are sentiments which man finds in his heart, and which constitute the basis of all societies ; there are also sentiments which he finds in his imagination, and which are only the shadow and the altered reflection of the former. Literature begins with the one, and ends with the other.

When literature arrives at these last sentiments, when the imagination, which was formerly contented with painting the natural affections, endeavors to replace them by substituting other affections, then books no longer represent society ; they only represent the state of its imagination. But the imagination, above all, loves and seeks that which does not exist. When society becomes agitated by civil war, the imagination willingly makes idyls, and preaches peace and virtue ; when on the contrary it becomes quiet, and enjoys repose, the imagination recovers its taste for crimes. It is like the merchant of Horace, who praises the security of the land, when the tempest is raging ; but loves the waves and the storms when the vessel is in port. We may add to this natural contradiction of the human mind, the recollections, still fresh, of war and revolution, a relish for adventures, the dissatisfaction with repose, the hope of glory and fortune, the dislike of living in obscurity, a dislike which is more sen-

sibly felt by those who have done great things. It is these restless desires, and these confused emotions which the imagination collects and makes the subject of literary speculation. Hence arises the energy which we see in romances, and terror in dramas; hence this literature, which pleases society the more, as it resembles it the less. Society formerly loved to find in literature the adorned image of its sentiments, and this image served both as a lesson, and an encouragement; it seeks, nowadays, only for diversion. Not long since, it said to literature: Study me, so that you may instruct and elevate me;—it says, nowadays: Amuse me. Then the imagination begins to work, and it alone makes all the materials for literature. It does not always succeed in amusing the public; but it consummates the divorce between literature and society, each one going further and further as its wants or its inclinations urge it. Society has its affairs and its labors, every day becoming more gloomy, because every day, art finds less place in it; literature every day has its works more frivolous and vain, because every day, the study and observation of the world are less occupied with it.

Another cause sometimes increases this separation between society and literature, a separation which is one of the characteristic phases of the literary life of a nation: we refer to the imitation of foreign literature.

When literature becomes old, it begins to imitate, believing that it thereby rejuvenates itself. But there are times when foreign imitation serves only to increase more and more the separation between society and literature. What, in fact, can you expect the French genius to become, accustomed since the sixteenth century to that clearness of ideas and sentiments which constitutes its national character, when it finds itself suddenly thrown into the gloomy misanthropy of the English taste, or the dreamy mysticism of the German? It may for a moment, for the sake of fashion or mania, become melancholy and dreamy, but whatever it may do, it will never lose its own nationality. It will in vain put tears in its eyes, and sobs in its voice, dishevel its hair, and assume a gloomy visage; all that will only be for the stage, for romances, and perhaps also for some drawing-rooms. But the French genius appears through all these affectations; we perceive that the weepers repeat a lesson

which they have been taught ; there is in their groanings a certain irony which does not even seem bitter. Their feigned sadness and false reveries, which the French genius borrows from the English or the German, will never be any thing but a literary exercise ; it makes use of them only in writing and not in living ; its imagination alone is occupied with them, its character repels them.

It is not that the imitation of foreign literature is not often useful to us ; but all depends upon the times. Whilst a literature is still in its infancy and full of sap, imitation is of advantage ; it takes possession of this foreign graft, it appropriates it to itself, and becomes improved and more fruitful. Thus Corneille imitated the Spaniards ; thus the *Cid*, become French, acquired a new eclat upon our stage. There are, in the *Cid* of Corneille, many sentiments which are derived from Spain and chivalry ; but whether these sentiments be also French sentiments, or rather human sentiments, they do not contradict the idea which we have of a hero and a lover, and we never need, in understanding them ourselves, to have recourse to our recollections and our reflections. Never, as in modern dramas, have we need to say that such a sentiment which astonishes us, such an idea which shocks us, are adapted to the times and country of the hero ; in a word, we are not obliged, in order to relish a character, to place ourselves, as they say nowadays, at his point of view, and to make an effort of memory in order to enjoy the pleasure of the illusion. No ! the Spaniards of Corneille, the Greeks or the Romans of Racine, do not please us by the particular trait which characterizes their time or their country ; they please us because they reproduce the general traits of humanity, because they represent ourselves as we are.

With this mania for no longer wishing to take its basis in society as it exists, literature must also, in our times, be very subject to instability : and it is in this manner that we can very easily account for these rapid vicissitudes which cause the literary taste to change every ten years, and that men of forty years have already seen as many literary revolutions as political ones. We are not then surprised, if in such a state of things society, which has always the instinct of its own preservation, should regulate its customs according to the caprices of literature. It preserves and carefully conceals its moral customs, under the shelter of the domestic

fireside, exhibiting them only with modesty and reserve. But it gives to the first comer, its literary or political opinions. These it seems to take, abandon, and retake, with wonderful facility ; sometimes adoring the violent passions and despising rule, which it dishonors by the name of routine ; and at other times, resuming its taste for order and duty, and preaching it with fanaticism. But these capricious revolutions are all accomplished under the empire of ideas. Conversations and books change like the decorations of a theatre ; manners and habits remain steadfast and firm.

Upon this subject we will make one remark. Criticism is much at its ease in attacking the moral opinions which are alternately dominant in literature ; for it knows that these opinions do not hold to the true morals of society. It does not then fear, in remarking the progressive alterations which the expression of the passions and the sentiments of the human heart undergoes, that they would impute to them a desire to attack the morals and sentiments of our age ; it does not fear that they will confound them with those who curse, or who despair. It knows all that exists in our society of holy affections, of noble sentiments, of generous beliefs ; it knows that the heart of man is no more corrupt now than formerly, although the mind may be singularly exercised and refined. Therefore, what it blames in literature, are the strange characters which, far from being of our time, are of no epoch ; they are those odd sentiments which are above or below men ; they are those exaggerated passions which are born from the brain, and which the heart does not recognize. In a word, it regrets that literature, instead of painting and representing society in embellishing it, as it is its right and its peculiar province to do, seems to undertake to metamorphose it.

Let us then not be deceived ; although the moral opinions of literature do not represent the actual manners of society, criticism has nevertheless the right to take it under its supervision, for two reasons.

The first reason is purely literary. There are moral opinions which aid us in creating the beautiful ; there are also those which dispose us to create the deformed. But the duty of criticism, is to show that the beautiful is the aim and the end of literature ; and criticism should combat the opinions and ideas which divert the mind from this supreme object.

The second reason is entirely moral. The corruption of the understanding does not always produce, it is true, owing to the inconsistency of the human mind, the bad effects which we may apprehend, and many act better than they either think or speak. We should not, however, create any delusion with regard to the dangers of literary immorality. The bravado of vice, often innocent for the boaster himself, is fatal to his neighbors; it is especially injurious by example; by degrees, the good sentiments are altered by praising the bad; it is tempting too severely the infirmity of human nature, to place an excuse always within its reach, or perhaps even a eulogy upon every fault.

Let us endeavor hastily to sum up the ideas which we have just expressed. Our literature does not represent our society; it only represents the caprices and fancies of the mind. It is not then to condemn the manners of our age, to attack its moral opinions; for these are almost independent of the others. But as, with the time, these opinions have influence, either over our literature, whose creations become less pure, or upon the conscience of the public, which also becomes less decided in rebuking evil, it is the duty of the critic and the moralist to point out the alterations which literature causes the principal sentiments of the human heart to undergo; of those sentiments which are the perpetual subject of dramatic literature. Certainly, whatever ridicule or degradation the grand and simple affections of man, such as paternal and maternal love, may have suffered in dramas and romances, we are always sure of finding them pure and strong in the heart of a father or mother. But the people among whom literature preserves these pious affections in their original purity, at the same time that the family preserves an unalterable deposit of them, have the double glory of good works and good morals.

NOTES.

NOTE TO THE FIRST LECTURE.

WE cannot resist the desire of citing a curious passage from Livy,* which shows in the most striking manner what idea the Romans had of gladiators; how natural it seemed to them that slaves should come to kill themselves before their eyes, and how much they were astonished if freemen descended into the arena to dispute with them the glory of being the bravest, or to decide a quarrel of honor or ambition.

"Scipio celebrated at Carthagera, in Spain, two funeral games in honor of his father and his uncle. They were not slaves, or men selling their lives, who engaged in these gladiatorial combats, which made a part of these games; they were voluntary and gratuitous combatants who descended into the arena; some sent by their princes to give an example of the bravery of their nation, others who declared that they would combat willingly with each other to do honor to Scipio; some from honor and for a challenge, and others to settle their quarrels with arms in their hands; and among these last, there were some illustrious combatants; thus, there were two brothers who disputed with each other about the government of their country. Scipio in vain wished to reconcile them, and to decide their quarrel. They replied, that they wished to have no other arbiter but their swords. They fought with great desperation, and gave to the Roman army a remarkable spectacle, and a great lesson on the evils of ambition among men."

The Spaniards did not understand what the games of the Circus were; and the Romans, on their part, did not understand what was a tourney or a duel, for the sports of Carthagera were a real tournament. At the first glance, a tourney resembles a Circus; but the idea creates a difference in the things. In the Circus, there is the idea of a spectacle; in the tourney, the idea of a combat. In the one there are actors, although the game should continue even to the shedding of blood, in the other there are combatants. The difference of idea produces a difference in the result. The Circus destroys the Theatre, because the man who is interested in seeing blood flow, is not capable of being amused in seeing only tears flow, and the habit

* Livy, b. xxviii. chap. xxvi.

of feeling material emotions destroys the relish for moral emotion. The tournament, on the contrary, does not destroy the Theatre, because at the tournament there is not the pleasure and the theatrical emotion which we expect to find, although it may be found there also. The fault of the Circus and its evil is that it is fictitious, since they combat for the amusement of the spectators, and it resembles reality while blood flows there!

NOTE TO THE TWELFTH LECTURE.

"King Solomon, says a fabulist, was consulted one day by the judges of Damas with regard to a very embarrassing suit. Two men pretended to be sons of a rich merchant who had recently died, and both of them claimed his inheritance. They had been educated and maintained by the merchant, who seemed to love them both very much. But he always said that only one of them was his son, although he was always obstinate in refusing to say which of them had the right to this title. After his death, they endeavored to ascertain who was the son and heir of the merchant. The judges of Damas, although of acknowledged wisdom, could not decide this doubtful question, and they submitted the case to King Solomon. Solomon ordered the two young men and the body of the merchant to be brought in his coffin before him; and when the two claimants appeared, he told them that he would adjudge the inheritance to the one who would first take a bar of iron and break the coffin of his father. The guards gave an iron bar to each of the young men, who approached the coffin. One of them immediately struck the coffin which made an empty noise; but the other, in the act of striking it, fainted away in exclaiming: 'No! I can never break the coffin of my father. I would rather prefer that my brother should have the whole inheritance.' Then said Solomon, 'You are the son of the merchant, you have proved your filiation by your respect.' The judges of Damas admired the decision of Solomon, which so much resembled that which he pronounced between the two mothers; seeking in both cases to ascertain the truth by the aid of the sentiments of nature."

This is certainly a beautiful homage rendered to the sanctity of the paternal character. The second narrative which we propose to relate is not less curious or expressive. We extract it from a work of Nicius Erythræus, entitled: *Exempla virtutum et vitiorum*, a kind of morality put in action, which contains many interesting and remarkable stories.

"A young man of the city of Tagliacozzo, who was about to marry, resolved to drive his father from his house and to banish him into the country. He feared that the company of the old man would be disagreeable to his young wife. His father was more than a hundred years old, and was therefore unable to resist. He had him

placed in his chariot and drawn to the very door of the old farmhouse which they had in the country. It was in this house that they wished to confine him. 'My son,' said the old man, 'I know what you mean to do; but I only ask you to carry me as far as that stone table which is in the garden.' The son conducted his father to this table, and when they arrived there, 'Now you can go and leave me,' said the old man: 'it is here that I once led my father and abandoned him.' 'Ah! my father,' exclaimed the young man, 'if I have children, it is here that they will lead me in my turn.' And then carrying back his father to Tagliacozzo, he gave him the best chamber in his house and the most honorable place at his nuptial feast. Therefore God blessed him, and he lived old and respected."

THE END.

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